Table of Contents

1. Table of Contents
2. Requests
3. Remember The Alamo
4. The United States of Idiots [Non-Canon]
5. New Sweden Tumblr Story
6. Sleepy Twin
7. Coffee
8. Bonding (non-canon)
9. Shot From The Sky
10. Puppet State
11. Bonus Scene from Chapter 5 of Secrecy and Deception
12. Blinded
13. Americanized (Non-Canon)
14. The Truth (Americanized Part 2, Non Canon)
15. Languages
16. The Nightmare
17. Dog Therapy (non-canon)
18. Concerned Family
19. Arson
20. Human Perceptions
21. Fuck Tourists
22. Delusions and Poison
23. Fear
24. United States of Ameridad [Non-Canon]
25. Hawaii and the Celtic Nations
26. Sucessor
27. The Sign
28. Finland's Wings [Non-Canon]
29. Russian Empire's Thoughts on Alaska
30. The Birth of the Empire
31. Southern Neighbors
32. Impermanently
33. America's Childhood
34. The Boy and The Charter

35. The Burn Recovery
36. Kindred Spirits
37. The River
38. Confessions
39. Defenestrations
40. Nieuw York
41. A Parental Sibling
42. Colony to Superpower (Non-Canon)
43. What's The Worst Way to Punish An Introvert?
44. Little America Drabble
45. Strike Back
46. Peshtigo
47. Tulips (Non-Canon)
48. The Identity Of The State
49. The Satellite Inspection
50. Becoming a Satellite
51. An Unwilling Reunion
52. The Fire Pokémon Club
53. The Discovery of a Kindred Spirit
54. India Gets Revenge
55. Camping is Deadly
56. When a Land Lacks a Host
57. The Frozen State [Non-Canon]
58. The North and the South [Non-Canon]
59. America and the Struggles of Having a Human Face
60. Sammy and Sammy Junior
61. The Other Side of the United States
62. The Silence That Falls When The War Ends
63. A Reckoning With Oneself
64. The Living Ghost of a Long Dead Brother
65. The Faceless People You Have Yet to Meet
66. The Time Spent in a Gilded Cage
67. Parental Rage
68. Texas gets a Concussion (and he totally deserved it)
69. Mistakes in Love
70. The Fires of Hatred and Passion Are Much the Same
71. The Not So Good Friday
72. The Gardening Accident (Soviet America AU)
73. Checkmate
74. The Dying Bay

75. What's In A Name?
76. A Dead Man's Flag
77. Death of Unity
78. An Old Friendship
79. The Meaning of Freedom
80. The Outlier of Oceania
81. The 11th State [Non-Canon]
82. Celtic Brothers
83. The Boston Christmas Tree
84. We Should Know Who We Are
85. The New Father
86. The New Century
87. Flight Lessons
88. A Little Brother's Guidance
89. One Good Leg
90. The Crumbling Precipice
91. ASEAN Nonsense
92. The Little Empire's Crush
93. Bonds & Bruises
94. A Concerned Friend
95. The Murder of a Kingdom
96. Countrycats
97. The Funky Gender of the Northern Carolina
98. The Ghosts That Haunt You
99. The Place of Origin
100. Alba Agus A Mac
101. York and Jay
102. False Love of a False Father
103. Meeting Mississippi
104. When the Father Had Power (Non-Canon)
105. The Dragon's (Grand)Son
106. A Drowned Out Voice
107. The Showcase
108. Missouri's Medical Report
109. Sammy's Crush
110. Panic Attacks and Drunkenness
111. An Older Sister
112. The Night Sky
113. The Independent Colony
114. Autonomous Menaces

115. Estranged Son
116. Past Accents
117. After Death
118. Estranged Brothers
119. Canada's Cold War
120. Of Mothers and Mother Figures
121. The Dragon's Rebirth
122. Familial
123. A Moment of Reflection (Soviet America AU)
124. Broken Brother (Soviet America AU)
125. Book 2

Table of Contents

This contains all the descriptions for the oneshots in this book for the convenience of anyone looking for specific oneshots or characters.

This is in the same order as the book!

Remember the Alamo

The End of the Texan Revolution

United States of Idiots [Non-Canon]

50 Times the States Did Something Super Dumb and Funny. And America's Reaction to His Kids Being Crackheads.

New Sweden Tumblr Story

A transcript of a Tumblr RP around Delaware's past as New Sweden

Sleepy Twin

Delaware is tired and decides to take a nap on his twin New York.

Coffee

In America's household, there is one rule. Don't touch the Coffee Trio's coffee.

Bonding [non-canon]

Delaware tries to bond with one of the newest territories, Hawaii.

Shot From the Sky

The Battle of Vicksburg was a huge Union victory. Unfortunately for the Union, Michigan was seriously injured and nearly killed by his

sister, Mississippi, during the battle.

Puppet State

The Philippines has been trapped as Japan's puppet for months now, and as Japan slowly breaks his mental state, she has another person she wants his help in breaking. His daughter, Guam.

Bonus Scene from Chapter 5 of Secrecy and Deception

"A British man talking about how the Declaration of Independence was important and great. He almost laughed but was not able to hold back giggles. Dad also looked incredibly amused by that. Britain would probably be getting a call from Dad laughing about this." -Missouri, Secrecy and Deception

Blinded

Ireland tried to warn Hawaii of what Britain was truly like. Now he's paying the price.

Americanized (Part 1) (Non-Canon)

Oklahoma used to be the Indian Territory. Now, he's an American State that wants nothing to do with them.

The Truth (Americanized Part 2) (Non-Canon)

Oklahoma learns the truth.

Languages

America is very tired and forgets English.

The Nightmare

Finland's dreams are full of regret.

Dog Therapy (non-canon)

Alaska gives his nephew therapy with the help of his dogs.

Concerned Family

New Zealand was abused. He doesn't think so. His family is concerned.

Arson

California likes fire. They also hate their brother.

Human Perceptions

Sometimes New Jersey just wants to pretend to be human. That does make things awkward when his human friends start talking about his family though.

Fuck Tourists

Hawaii hates tourists. America gets her a shirt.

Delusions and Poison

Russia wants his "son" to forget his past. And Russia will do whatever it takes to make that possible.

Fear

Illinois is haunted by the threats of the mob, not that his roommate is aware. That won't stop Michigan from comforting him as the nightmares awaken him again and again.

United States of Ameridad [Non-Canon]

America is a dad, and he loves helping and caring for each and every one of his kids.

Hawaii and the Celtic Nations

Hawaii visits the Celtic Nations, oblivious to their family ties.

Successor

Poland doesn't think he deserves to be Poland. His father disagrees.

The Sign

Germany has a funny sign. So does his father.

Finland's Wings [Non-Canon]

Finland gets a new flag. In doing so, he also gets a pair of wings.

Russian Empire's Thoughts on Alaska

Russian Empire was an awful person. He didn't think of his son as a son. Just as a tool.

The Birth of an Empire

England was prepared to kill Wales by signing the acts disestablishing the Principality of Wales. Unfortunately, that plan backfired, and now England must deal with the consequences.

Southern Neighbors

Texas has a problem

Impermanetly

An angry man shoots and kills New York. It's the first time a state dies.

America's Childhood

The year is 1610. Jamestown has just been put under martial law. This action will have dangerous and invasive side effects on the two personifications that make up that land. And both of them are helpless to stop it.

The Boy and the Charter

The Virginia character has just been signed. That has some effects on poor Roanoke.

The Burn Recovery

Alaska is hurt badly. Luckily, he always has his dad to help him.

Kindred Spirits

Ireland had been helped by a lot of people during his Famine. The one he remembers the most fondly is the Choctaw Nation.

The River

Delaware and New Jersey don't exactly get along. A border conflict makes this worse.

Confessions

Britain is a terrible father, but he has many favorites, picked because of their majority white populations and their lack of a native personification as a birth parent. Or so they thought.

Defenestrations

The Kingdom of Bohemia has a city called Prague. Apparently, it's good for throwing people out of windows.

Nieuw York

New Netherlands was murdered a long time ago. It's really unfortunate who found her body.

A Parental Sibling

Delaware is sick. Luckily he has a big brother/father figure who can look after him

Colony to Superpower (Non-Canon)

A colony America meets a future version of himself.

What's the Worst Way to Punish an Introvert

Sometimes child abuse isn't as apparent as it seemed. Take this case of Finland and the Russian Empire.

Little America Drabble

Just a little America drabble.

Strike Back

Ohio and North Carolina were always the pilots of the family. So when they were informed of the plan now known as the Dolittle Raid, they were eager to participate.

Peshtigo

The Peshtigo fire was a brutal fire that ravaged Wisconsin. Both the state and its personification. Luckily, Wisconsin's family is there to help her.

Tulips (Non-Canon)

Canada is picking up his boyfriend from the airport so they can spend a week together. (Not canon to my countryhumans universe, this is a requested oneshot)

The Identity of the State

Illinois is in deep, deep trouble.

The Satellite Inspection

Soviet likes inspecting his satellites to make sure they are turning out like he wants them too. Sometimes, they aren't. That's when things get bad for them.

Becoming a Satellite

Hungary is about to become a satellite state. Shame he doesn't know what it entails.

An Unwilling Reunion

1822 Annexation of the Dominican Republic

The Fire Pokémon Club

Five countries have the ability to create fire. So why not make a club?

The Discovery of a Kindred Spirit

The moment Choctaw decides to donate money to the Irish during

the Famine.

India Gets Revenge

India does not like the curry that exists in England. She really shouldn't.

Camping is Deadly

Florida is a great brother and friend. He's just not the best person to go camping with.

When a Land Lacks a Host

When the Allies occupied Germany, they killed the personification of the nation and prevented a new one from being born. Turns out that has consequences.

The Frozen State [Non-Canon]

Lake Superior. Beautiful, but deadly. Michigan learned that the hard way.

The North and the South [Non-Canon]

The births of North Korea and South Korea.

America and the Struggles of Having a Human Face

America has body dysmorphia. It's not something he's handled well.

Sammy and Sammy Junior

Polynesia is a very close family. They visit each other and hang out often. It's a shame when one of those meetings goes a bit sour due to an accident.

The Other Side of the United States

America loves his kids, which sometimes makes it hard to remember he's an empire. Here's your reminder.

The Silence that Falls When the War Ends

England was badly injured at Bunker Hill. So how did he handle it when he arrived home?

A Reckoning with Oneself

Ireland is a very catholic nation and over a thousand years old. Therefore, being queer and accepting queerness is hard for him.

The Living Ghost of a Long Dead Brother

Sweden meets her long-dead half-brother.

The Faceless People You Have Yet To Meet

When Hawai‘i became a part of the United States, she expected many things. However, she did not expect everyone to be talking about people who didn't exist and act like she was in the wrong for being confused about who they were. AKA Hawai‘i becomes a US Territory, and the states forget to tell her about America having DID.

The Time Spent in a Gilded Cage

During the War of 1812, Governor Hull surrendered the entire Territory of Michigan to the British. Michigan is forced to live with the British for two years until he is returned to the Americans at the Treaty of Ghent. This details his entire experience during that war and what he experienced.

Parental Rage

The system's POV of Ghent, when they get Michigan back.

Texas Gets A Concussion (and he totally deserves it)

Texas is furious after hearing about how the new territory of Hawaii burned his brother, Alaska. So he decides to confront Hawaii about it himself.

Mistakes in Love

Illinois has just learned about the existence of Beaver Island. He's

not happy about it.

The Fires of Hatred and Passion Are Much the Same

France and Britain are somewhat enemies. However as time goes on, they become fonder and fonder of each other.

The Not So Good Friday

It was a peaceful Good Friday in 1964, and Alaska was enjoying his afternoon in Anchorage. Then he got hit by an earthquake.

The Gardening Accident (Soviet America AU)

A oneshot written for the Sovime AU created by @universal-casey on tumblr

Checkmate

Croatia has just signed the Sarajevo Agreement, a big step towards her independence.

The Dying Bay

Plymouth's land is about to become a part of Massachusetts Bay. He's made his peace with that, but Massachusetts Bay has not.

What's in a Name?

Even many years after Massachusetts Bay's death, Plymouth still refuses to take on his name. The birth of two new colonies begins to change that.

A Dead Man's Flag

Delaware was the reincarnation of the son of Forest Finns. Due to his reincarnation-caused amnesia, he has very limited memories of the man he calls isä. But a gift from his uncle might spark a new memory to return. More importantly, he had a physical trace of his father.

Death of Unity

The Japanese Empire was about to annex the Korean Empire after years of breaking him down. Korea still refuses to give in.

An Old Friendship

Morocco was the first country to recognize America's independence. The two countries have been firm friends ever since.

The Meaning of Freedom

Philippines has not been having a fun time in the 20th century, as his mind is ripped away from him again and again. But finally, his mind is freed and he can begin to heal.

The Outlier of Oceania

Madagascar is not Polynesian, but her sister, French Polynesia, seems determined to drag her to Polynesian family reunions anyway.

The 11th State [non-canon]

America was so happy that his children were now getting bodies of their own. New York is the most recent, although he has some things to say about it.

Celtic Brothers

Ireland is newly independent and struggling with chronic pain and an injury that has left him disabled. Good thing Scotland is there to help.

The Boston Christmas Tree

On the hundredth anniversary of the Halifax Explosion, Massachusetts and Nova Scotia meet again in Boston.

We Should Know Who We Are

Finland has been looking forward to meeting the new country of Estonia.

The New Father

Quebec (formerly known as Canada) has just become a British Colony. Now it is time he learns what that means.

The New Century

As the 1700s end and the 1800s begins, America reflects back on life and how he got to where he is.

Flight Lessons

New York and Pennsylvania were both born with wings. Their first attempt at flying could have gone better.

A Little Brother's Guidance

Michigan is unable to see the inner world. A newborn Illinois decides to be his eyes.

One Good Leg

America got shot in the leg in the Battle of Okinawa. The person who saved him was not the person he was expecting.

The Crumbling Precipice

British Western Pacific Territories wakes up after almost dying (part two of a collab with ApeculiarChild2

ASEAN Nonsense

A typical ASEAN meeting can be very exhausting for it's namesake.

The Little Empire's Crush

Britain (although he is not yet known by that name) experiences his first crush. It's a shame that it is a man.

Bonds & Bruises

There are strong bonds that bind countries to their colonies. Ireland despises how his bond with Britain feels.

A Concerned Friend

Scotland has not heard word from England since the Norman Invasion. So when he got the chance to travel to London to see England again, he jumped at the opportunity. What he discovers is worse than being left in the dark.

The Murder of a Kingdom

Gwynedd had a bad feeling when he was invited to meet with Normandy. He should have listened to that feeling.

Countrycats

Countryhumans as cats

The Funky Gender of the Northern Carolina

North Carolina has a strange relationship with her gender.

The Ghosts That Haunt You

Plymouth had never gotten over the deaths of Massachusetts Bay and Province of Maine. Statehood only further proved that.

The Place of Origin

North Carolina is the home of her father's birthplace. They talk about that.

Alba agus A Mac

Scotland adores his son, the personification of the Orcadians.

York and Jay

New York and New Jersey have a sibling rivalry. Sometimes, it feels too real for New Jersey.

False Love of a False Father

Hungary knew the consequences would be dire if he lost the Hungarian Revolution. He still fights them regardless.

Meeting Mississippi

The time has come for the US states to meet their newest sister, Mississippi.

When the Father Had Power (Non-Canon)

When America goes back in time, he confronts the man who raised him.

The Dragon's (Grand)Son

A talk with Wales ends up with Britain gaining dragon traits. They learn to adjust.

A Drowned Out Voice

The District of Columbia had always been different from her siblings. That difference always made her feel so alone.

The Showcase

Queen Victoria had always been interested in Britain's colonies. So Britain decides to show her one of them.

Missouri's Medical Report

Missouri was a good doctor. He did his job well. That's why he needed to send his brother's medical report to the Army Medical Museum, not matter how uncomfortable it made him.

Sammy's Crush

American Samoa has been crushing on Fauna for months. Will he finally have the courage to ask them out?

Panic Attacks and Drunkenness

United States has trauma from the 1814 Burning of Washington. It's a shame that trauma is so easily triggered.

An Older Sister

Virginia didn't expect to become an older sister again. That didn't mean she wasn't excited about it.

The Night Sky

San Marino had always loved looking up at the stars. So when they began to fade away, he panicked.

The Independent Colony

Greenland had been worried when Denmark was captured by Germany. Luckily, his people have a plan.

Autonomous Menaces

Northern Ireland hates getting dragged into the UK's nonsense. Unfortunately for her, Wales and Scotland are intent on dragging her in anyway.

Estranged Son

Britain and America have a very estranged relationship. That doesn't mean they can't be close.

Past Accents

South Carolina and Australia have a strange history with each other's accents

After Death

Armenia deals with the consequences of death.

Estranged Brothers

North Korea and South Korea never got along much. But they still loved each other anyway.

Canada's Cold War

The Gouzenko affair causes a few problems for Canada.

Of Mothers and Mother Figures

Jersey and America had always had a very close relationship. So when America learns something that makes him question his childhood, he goes to her for help.

The Dragon's Rebirth

Wales has just regained his dragon traits. That brings back some old memories.

Familial

Cornwall makes her relative a gift while thinking about his nature.

A Moment of Reflection (Soviet America AU)

The Soviet Union was dead. America was finally free of his influence. Well, at least that was what he thought. Turns out the path to recovery isn't as linear as he thought.

Broken Brother (Soviet America AU)

Canada had worried for his brother during the long fifty years of America's occupation by the Soviet Union. Now that his brother is free, Canada is now seeing how much he has changed.

Requests

Just to make things easier on me and to ensure I do not overlook your request, I ask that you make your request in the attached Google form or on an ask to my Tumblr blog. This allows me to keep track of requests much easier.

Remember The Alamo

Texas Revolution—requested by helicopter_stan.

Battle of San Jacinto, April 21, 1836

Texas let out an anxious breath as he and his army began climbing up the hill toward the Mexican encampment. He knew how this would end if they lost, the Alamo and Goliad being prime examples of why Texas couldn't lose. He wouldn't—he couldn't let his people be massacred again.

Texas had to win this battle. He wouldn't fail his people again.

Texas watched as the men led by General Sidney Sherman started the attack, crying out, "Remember the Alamo" and "Remember Goliad." They knew what would happen if they lost as well. They had to win. They had to prove to the person Texas despised more than anything in the world, who, unfortunately, was his mother, that they would win.

Some of his people had been Americans before they became Texans. They told Texas about the United States's history. They were the descendants of revolutionaries, stubborn people who had done the impossible, who had done what Texas was attempting to do now. Their ancestors had done this once. Now, they just had to do it again.

No pressure or anything.

Texas shook himself out of his thoughts. There was a better time to be distracted. He had to focus. He needed to win this.

Texas quickly attacked and killed the first Mexican soldier he saw before cutting his way through the Mexican army. He needed to find Mexico. If he could hurt her, Texas could hopefully convince

her to surrender.

Texas looked around the blood-soaked battlefield for her. The battle had been bloody even though it hadn't been going on for long. It was almost terrifying how quickly blood could be spilled, and men could die. Then Texas spotted her.

"MÉXICO!" Texas yelled, rushing toward the country. Mexico turned toward him, her face twisting into a sneer.

"Hola Tejas. Ya terminaste de fingir de ser un país?" (Hello Texas. Are you done pretending to be a country?) Those words send red-hot anger through Texas' body, causing him to tighten his grip on his weapon.

"Yo soy un país." (I am a country) he snarled out. Mexico rolled her eyes.

"No tienes bandera y eres un tonto. Para este rebelde tan infantil ahora." (You are flagless and a fool. Stop this childish rebellion at once.) Mexico shot back. How dare she? How dare she bring up Texas' lack of a flag? Texas was working on getting one made, but for her to bring it up was infuriating. She saw his lack of a flag as his inability to be a country. And that made Texas angrier than he had ever been before.

Texas began to lose control of his anger; the sounds of battle, the gunfire, the screams of the injured and dying, the sounds of his cannons that were firing broken glass, musket balls, and horseshoes, all of that faded away. Texas could only hear Mexico, her taunts digging into his brain and bringing up his insecurities.

Texas could only see her smug expression; she was most likely convinced she had already won the war. Texas loosened his grip on his musket, knowing it wouldn't be helpful with how close Mexico and he had come to each other.

"If you want my land, Mexico, you'll have to kill me. I won't surrender." Texas told her. Mexico's eyes narrowed, her face twisting in anger.

"Eres un estado Mexicano. Debes qué estar hablando español."(You are a Mexican state. You should be speaking Spanish.) She said. Texas narrowed his eyes, his anger threatening to overwhelm him and make him do something stupid.

"I am a nation. I am the Republic of Texas, and I'll speak whatever language I damn well please." Texas said, starting to approach Mexico, who didn't back off. Texas didn't know why, but he thought she was overconfident. She had committed two massacres against his people. She didn't see them as threats anymore, just something she could kill.

Texas hated it. Texas hated Mexico.

So he stabbed her. Before Mexico could react, Texas had taken his Bowie knife and sunk it into her stomach. Mexico screamed in pain and grabbed his wrist as she dropped to her knees, pain and anger in her eyes.

"Tú pequeño traidor rebelde." (You rebellious little traitor.) She spat out. Texas pulled his wrist and knife free, looking around the battlefield, his mind starting to process outside sounds again. The battle was over. The field was covered with dead Mexican soldiers, but when Texas looked around, he couldn't see many dead Texans.

Texas couldn't see Santa Anna either.

Texas turned back to Mexico, who was holding the injury on her stomach, still staring up at Texas with hate-filled eyes.

"Esta batalla ya terminó, México. Ríndete. Para esta guerra. Reconóceme cómo el país que soy. He terminado con este derramamiento de sangre." (This battle is over Mexico. Surrender. Stop this war. Recognize me as the country I am. I'm done with bloodshed.) Texas told her. Mexico gave no response, just started at him with those same hate filled eyes.

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May 15, 1836

They had captured Santa Anna the day after the Battle of San

Jacinto. Now, he and Mexico would sign treaties to recognize Texas' independence. He was filled with nervous energy. He had no international recognition, but now that Mexico would recognize him as the nation as the nation he was, more countries would follow.

Texas entered the room, and Mexico, sitting in the only chair, immediately glared at him. Santa Anna and David Burnet, Texas' interim president, would be signing the treaties in another room. Texas was in charge of settling things with Mexico.

"Ya supongo qué estas consciente de los términos de este tratado?" (I assume you are aware of the terms of this treaty?) Texas asked Mexico.

"Tenemos el Acuerdo Público, y el Tratado Secreto" (We have the Public Agreement, and the Secret Treaty.) Mexico said, hissing out the words "Secret Treaty" like they were poisonous.

"Si. Y vas a reconocer mi independencia?" (Yes. And you'll make sure to recognize my independence?) Texas asked. Mexico laughed, a cold look in her eyes.

"Mi gente nunca van ha aceptar este tratado. Has forzado a mi presidente a firmarlo mientras que el ha estado en la cárcel! Y aún que mi gobierno lo haga, yo personalmente nunca lo voy a hacer. Aún no tienes bandera, Tejas." (My people will never accept this treaty. You have forced my president to sign it while he is a prisoner! And even if my government does, I personally never will. You are still flagless Texas.) Mexico said. Texas clenched his fists.

"It's Texas. I'm Texas now, not Tejas, not Coahuila y Tejas, but the Republic of Texas," he told Mexico.

"Entonces, República de Tejas, espero que disfrutes tu independencia. Pero cuándo falles como un país, no esperes que esté sorprendida." (Well then Republic of Texas I hope you enjoy your independence. But when you fail as a country, don't expect me to be surprised.) Mexico said before standing up and marching out of the room.

After a moment, Texas sat down in the chair Mexico had just vacated. He had done it. He had won. Then, that statement finally sank it. He had won.

What was that going to mean for his future? Texas knew he had the Secret Treaty, which would ensure future treaties with the Mexican government would go well, but he was still worried about attacks from Mexico. Mexico was a lot more powerful than him, and she knew it. If she broke the treaty, Texas would not likely win another war with her anytime soon.

And international recognition! Texas had to get others to recognize him. The United States was necessary, as that country and he shared a border, so his support would be valuable. The empires France and Britain, along with other European countries, would also be useful allies.

Texas let out a shaky breath as he realized how daunting the task laid out in front of him was. Making himself a prosperous nation was a big task, but it had been done before. The United States had done it. Why couldn't he?

The United States of Idiots [Non-Canon]

50 Times the States Did Something Super Dumb and Funny.

And America's Reaction to His Kids Being Crackheads.

Thank you to helicopter_stan for helping me research for this chapter. Especially for Connecticut.

Alabama-Eel Rain

"Dad, I have a bit of a problem," Alabama said. America quickly turned to look at him. He looked fine physically, but his face was distressed.

"Are you okay? Do you need any help?" America asked. Alabama shook his head, but his distressed look remained.

"Something happened." Alabama began, "In a town called Coalburg. And I don't know how it happened. I'm still trying to process it myself."

"What happened?" America asked, nervous.

"I'm not sure how to say it," Alabama said, rubbing his arm.

"Whatever you say, I'll be able to handle it," America told him. Alabama sighed and removed his hand from his arm.

"You sure? It's a bit of an odd one." He asked with a raise of his eyebrow.

"Yes," America responded. He wanted to know what was making his son look so distressed.

"It started raining eels."

"How the *hell* does it start raining *eels?*"

Alaska-Mayor Stubbs

"Aang Adaŷ. I need you to meet one of my mayors, Mayor Stubbs." Alaska asked, walking into America's office.

"Sure. What for?" America asked, spinning a pen between his fingers. Alaska shuffled his feet, a nervous habit of his. That worried America. He hoped nothing bad had happened.

"I can't say. Just come with me." Alaska said before walking out of the room.

"This is a cat."

"It's the mayor."

"It's a *cat.*"

"That is also the mayor."

"Alaska, why the hell do you have a cat as mayor?"

"I mean, technically, it's honorary because the town is a historic district, but I think he's the best mayor I've ever had."

"...Please don't let your siblings know about this."

"Too late. Besides, Cali had a dog as mayor once."

"Cali had a *what*?"

Arizona-Owns the London Bridge

"Dad, I own the London Bridge now!" Arizona exclaimed as she walked into the room. America hoped he misheard that because what the fuck.

"You own the *what*?" America asked, staring at her in confusion.

"The London Bridge!" She repeated. How on earth does she own the London Bridge?

"*How?*" America asked. Arizona smiled.

"The British were selling it, and one of Souri's people bought it. Now it's in my state!" Arizona explained.

"*Why* were they selling the London Bridge?" America asked, utterly confused. He didn't understand his children at all.

"The bridge didn't support modern traffic and needed to be replaced."

Britain was now on the list of people America didn't understand.

"So they decided the best plan of action was to sell it? Who buys a bridge that can't support modern traffic?" America asked. America knew his people were a bit crazy, but seriously? This?

"Robert P. McCulloch. And we fixed it so it can support modern traffic." Arizona stated with a smile.

"Well, that's something at least. Now, if you'll excuse me, I need to contemplate my life choices." America said before standing up to leave the room.

"Well, while you do that, I'm going to tell Britain about this!" Arizona declared before rushing off. America froze before he went to chase after her.

"He doesn't know you exist! Ari, do not tell him that!"

Arkansas-1876 Fayetteville Newspaper fistfight

"Don't you hate it when two newspapers get into a fight, and the loser has to leave town?" Arkansas remarked from behind America.

"What?" America asked, turning to look at him.

"That happened yesterday," Arkansas stated as America stared at him in confusion.

"What? *Why*?" America asked.

"Editorial differences," Arkansas explained unhelpfully.

"Why was a *fistfight* the answer to that?" America asked, still incredibly confused. He would have expected very different political opinions to start a fistfight, but not that.

"Well, it was nice talking to you," Arkansas said before leaving.

"What? Ark, you can't just leave without explaining that! Ark!" America called out to his son unsuccessfully before sighing. "You know what? I'm probably better off not knowing."

California-The Gender Reveal Fire

"There's a terrible fire in my state right now," California said, walking toward America, who sighed.

"Cali, there's always a terrible fire in your state." He pointed out. California nodded.

"I know," California said with a resigned sigh.

"What caused this one?" America asked, expecting to hear the usual answers of unattended campfires and equipment malfunctions.

"A gender reveal party," California stated.

"Huh. That's new." America remarked.

"Thought you'd be more surprised," California said.

"It's 2020." America said with a shrug, "I've learned that being surprised is a waste of my time."

"Fair enough. Now I've got to stop myself from burning to the ground again."

Colorado-3 governors in a single day

"Hello, Colorado. Who have you elected as your new governor?" America asked upon seeing Colorado come home. Colorado sighed.

"Sit down because this is going to be a long story," Colorado said.

"Oh no, what happened this time?" America asked as he sat down on the couch.

"Alva Adams won the election." Colorado started. America nodded.

"Okay, so why do you sound so distressed about it?" America asked.

"Because then my legislature declared his opponent, James Peabody, governor, but on the condition that he immediately resign so that his lieutenant governor, Jesse McDonald, could be governor." Colorado finished. America stared at him.

"*Why*?"

"Election fraud accusations." He stated.

"Okay, but why make James Peabody retire?" America asked. Colorado shrugged.

"I don't know the exact reason, but hey, now I'm the only state to have three governors in one day!" Colorado said. America put his head in his hands.

"Don't do this again."

Connecticut: Putting A Cat on House Arrest

"Hey, Dad, I have to go watch a trial," Connecticut said, getting ready to leave the house.

"Who's trial?" America asked.

"Ruth Cisero. Her cat violated his restraining order and house arrest."

"A restraining order."

"Yes."

"On a *cat*?"

"Glad to see you were listening," Connecticut remarked as America stared at him before groaning.

"I hate this. Why must you be like this." America said. Connecticut smiled.

"It's a perfectly reasonable action to take," Connecticut explained.

"It's a cat, Nutmeg," America said.

"I'm well aware that it's a cat. But he violated his restraining order, so now his owner is on trial. Anyway, I'll be off now," Connecticut said before leaving.

"It's days like this where I regret being a dad."

Delaware-Money Rain in Lewes

"I love my people!" Delaware exclaimed as he reappeared in America's house.

"I'm glad you do, but what made you want to announce it?" America asked. Delaware smiled, looking like he was holding back a laugh.

"Someone died, and in his will, he asked someone to drop 10,000 dollars off of a helicopter that was over Lewes," Delaware exclaimed before bursting into laughter. America let out a small laugh.

"I can't believe they would do that." He said.

"You should always respect a dead man's wishes. Besides, it was awesome." Delaware said.

"I bet it was. At least it's better than that one time Alabama had it rain eels," America remarked. Delaware gave America a blank stare before he opened his mouth.

"I'm so glad I'm not part of the South anymore." Americasnorted.

"You say that like being a part of any other region is better."

Florida-Throwing dead fish into Alabama

"Hello, my beautiful children. Flor, please stop hitting Al with dead fish." America said as he walked into the kitchen, not batting an eye at Florida's latest antics.

"You're not even going to ask why?" Alabama asked as he ducked under a fish that was heading for his face.

"It's Florida." Louisiana, Iowa, and America remarked.

"Well, you have a point," Alabama said before getting hit in the face. "FUCK!"

"This competition is so much more fun when I do it to Alabama in person," Florida said with a laugh.

"What competition?" America asked, causing Louisiana and Iowa to groan.

"I didn't want to know," Iowa muttered.

"I have a competition where my people and I go to the Alabama border and throw dead fish into Alabama!" Florida explained. The room was silent for a moment before Alabama loudly exclaimed.

"Well FUCK you, Florida." America sighed. Why was Florida like this?

"It's days like this when I get concerned for Florida's mental stability," Iowa remarked.

"So, every day?" Louisiana asked, raising his eyebrow.

"Yeah, exactly."

"I CAN HEAR YOU!"

Georgia-Three governors controversy

"Dad, something awful happened today," Georgia said as she approached America. America immediately began to examine her, making sure she wasn't hurt.

"Are you okay? Are you hurt? What happened? Was Soviet involved?" America asked, trying to keep panic from his voice. Georgia shook her head, and America let out a sigh of relief.

"Eugene Talmadge, the governor-elect of my state, died today," Georgia said.

"I'm sorry," America said, but before he could continue, Georgia cut him off.

"That's not even the worst part, Dad. We don't have a plan for who becomes governor if that happens. And now three people are claiming they are governor of Georgia!" She exclaimed. America winced. That would not be fun for either of them.

Why did this have to happen now? America was busy dealing with so much other stuff.

"Who are the people claiming to be governor?" America asked.

Georgia said, "Ellis Arnall, the outgoing governor; Melvin E. Thompson, the lieutenant governor-elect; and Herman Talmadge, Eugene Talmadge's son."

Well, America has no clue why the hell Herman Talmadge thinks he has a fucking claim to the Georgian governorship because now all he's doing is making things more complicated, which is precisely what they all need right now.

"Tell Herman this isn't a goddamn monarchy and that he has no reason to claim governorship." Georgia smiled.

"Gladly."

Hawaii-Mailing a coconut

"Oak, you need to fix your mailing system," Hawaii said, walking into the room holding a dried-out coconut.

"What's wrong with it?" Oklahoma asked, looking slightly offended.

"I can't send this coconut." Hawaii said, holding up the coconut to

reveal it had 'The Lower 48 are idiots' written on it.

"Hey! And if you want to send a coconut, put it in a box." Oklahoma said. Hawaii sighed.

"Okie, in my state, we can send coconuts by themselves—no box or anything," Hawaii explained.

"Why?" America asked. Hawaii shrugged.

"It's just something we do. And Okie's state won't let me do it!" Hawaii complained.

"Because normal people don't do that!" Oklahoma defended himself before turning to America. "Dad, tell her that normally people don't do that."

"Please, we're American states, and none of us are normal," Hawaii said. America nodded in agreement.

"Yeah, the two requirements for being an American state are that you have to be insane and not get along with anyone else," He added. Oklahoma threw his hands into the air.

"I'm not insane! Not all of us are!"

"You're a part of the US. If you think we aren't insane, you're the most delusional of us all."

Idaho-Wallace, the Center of the Universe

"I have the center of the universe!" Idaho exclaimed, rushing into the living room.

"This is you being petty about getting back at me, isn't it?" America asked, causing Idaho to nod with a smile.

"You can't prove that the lead pollution is coming from my mines near Wallace, just like you can't prove Wallace doesn't have the center of the universe," Idaho said, crossing her arms.

America groaned. Why did his family have to be so petty over the

dumbest things?

"You can't disprove that lead pollution might come from the mines," America argued.

"And you can't disprove that Wallace isn't the center of the universe." Idaho countered. America sighed.

"I can't...that's the most frustrating thing about your petty revenge," America said. Idaho smiled.

"That was the point."

Illinois-reversing the flow of the Chicago river

"I'm going to reverse the flow of the Chicago River!" Illinois exclaimed, walking up to America, who sighed. What is it with his states and fucking around with rivers? And why the fuck is Illinois even attempting this? What's the point, other than to spite the universe?

"Why?" America said in a resigned voice. Every time his kids made an announcement like this, America began to regret his life choices more than he usually does.

"To prevent pollution from contaminating Chicago's drinking water," Illinois explained.

"Oh, thank god there's an actual reason," America muttered.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Illinois asked, raising his eyebrow.

"I thought you were doing it to spite the universe at first."

"As much as I love spiting the universe, my people's well-being comes first," Illinois said. "Now I have to go spite the universe for my people's well-being."

Indiana-Robin Hood is a communist.

"I'm telling you, Kota, he's a communist!" America heard Indiana exclaim. America groaned. Not another one. Dealing with all of

these accusations of communists was exhausting, and America hated having to deal with this.

Mainly because he wasn't getting a lot of sleep, and it was getting harder and harder to keep track of who to trust.

"Who's a communist?" America asked, entering the room.

"Robin Hood," Indiana stated with a serious look.

"Goodnight, everyone," America said before leaving the room.

"It's 1 in the afternoon." North Dakota said.

"Yep. Goodnight. I will be in my room questioning my life choices."

"Dad, it's a reasonable accusation. Just let me explain."

"I'd rather question my life choices, Diana."

"You should have told me Robin Hood was a member of the Communist Party," Soviet said as he walked by America. America sighed and pinched the bridge of his nose.

"It was not me," America muttered, wondering how Soviet had already discovered Indiana's ridiculous idea.

"I know. But you get blamed since the others don't know about your states." Soviet said, "Now I'm off to tell my allies about this."

America groaned upon hearing that. He hated Indiana so much for this.

"AME, WHY THE HELL DO YOU THINK ROBIN HOOD IS COMMUNIST!?"

Note to self: Find something dumb a Soviet state has done and use it to embarrass Soviet.

Iowa-Creating sliced bread

"I've changed the world as we know it. Things will never be the same. You will all be in awe of what I have done and respect—" America cut off Iowa's rant.

"Did anyone die?" America asked because the last time someone changed the world drastically, they shot an Archduke in the head and started the Great War.

"Wha—no!" Iowa said, looking confused. America let out a sigh of relief.

"Oh, good. So what did you do?" America asked.

"One of my people made a machine." Iowa started before pausing. America raised an eyebrow.

"A lot of people make machines." America deadpanned. Iowa rolled her eyes.

"Shut up, Dad. This machine can slice bread." Iowa finished. Finally! This was great news. Now, America didn't have to spend half an hour cutting bread because his children were too lazy to do it themselves.

"Iowa. Don't tell anyone this, but you're my favorite child now."

Kansas-flatter than a pancake

"It's official," Kansas said, causing America to look up from his work.

"Well, that's ominous and vague. Mind explaining?" America asked. Kansas smiled.

"I'm officially flatter than a pancake," she said before bursting into laughter. America opened his mouth, trying to find something to say, but he couldn't. So he settled for smiling and putting his face in his hands. His people were an odd bunch.

Suddenly, America heard loud footsteps running down the hall before Nebraska kicked the door open.

"Braska the door!" America said, looking at his son, who was smiling in a way that made America feel like he was planning something.

America hated when his kids had that smile because it usually meant a lot of headaches for him.

"I heard the news! I told you you were a flat bitch!" Nebraska yelled, pointing at Kansas.

"NEBRASKA!"

"I might be flat, but I can still kick your ass!" Kansas said before rushing at Nebraska, who quickly ran out of the room. America stood up quickly, knocking his chair over before rushing after them.

"Kansas, don't kill your brother, please!"

Kentucky-Their Relationship with Their Governor

America was talking with Virginia and West Virginia when Kentucky walked by, carrying the same picture he had been for the past couple of months.

"Hey Ken, why do you carry a picture of your governor?" America asked, curious.

"Because I want to fuck him."

America began making distressed noises as he stared at his son, feeling himself die inside. Kentucky, however, simply smiled at America, like he didn't just say one of the most horrible things America ever heard.

"Oh, what the *fuck*." America muttered to himself, "What the everloving *fuck* Ken."

"What? Is there a problem, Dad?" Kentucky asked. America just continued to blink at him in shock.

"Ken...what...I...*what*...why...why...*why*...I wish...I wish you were still a part of Virginia." America finally managed to stammer out. If

he were still part of Virginia, America would have never had to hear that statement.

"Oh fuck no, Tucky is *not* rejoining my state. He can keep whatever the *fuck* that is on his side of the border." Virginia protested, causing West Virginia to nod.

"We all know I hate to agree with Ginny, but I'm on her side for this one. Tuck, stay the fuck away from me." She said before walking out of the room.

"I don't know why y'all think that's weird. A lot of my people want to fuck him as well." Kentucky explained, although his explanation just made everything so much worse.

"NOPE! Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope. Nope." America said as he stood up and began walking out of the room, Virginia following.

"I'm going to disown Ken, I swear to God," America muttered.

"Do it. Please. For my mental well-being."

Louisiana-Laws are based on the Napoleonic Code.

"LOUISIANA!" New York yelled, marching into the room. Louisiana raised an eyebrow.

"Yes?" She said.

"Why is your legal system so weird?" New York demanded, crossing his arms.

"What do you mean by weird?" Louisiana asked, setting the book she was reading aside.

"I was talking to a lawyer from your state, and they said a bunch of things about your legal system that I've never seen in the legal systems of any other state." New York explained.

"Because Ana's legal system is based on Napoleonic Code and Spanish Law, not English Common Law like the rest of the states,"

America explained. New York made a weird face at that. There was a brief pause before New York spoke.

"You really are the Frenchest state of us all," he said, shaking his head.

"I can't tell if that's supposed to be a compliment, but since it's you, I'll take it as an insult," Louisiana said. New York scowled and flipped off Louisiana.

"I hope you have to deal with someone else's legal system. You won't understand it, and I'll find it funny." New York said, causing Louisiana to roll her eyes before leaving the room.

"The East Coast is so unpleasant sometimes," Louisiana remarked.

Maine-Hawaii 2

"Hey, Hawaii, I have Hawaii 2," Maine said, walking into the kitchen.

"What?" America asked, Hawaii voicing her own confusion.

"I have Hawaii 2, and Cards Against Humanity own it," Maine stated.

"I'm so confused." America said, "How do you have Hawaii?"

"I don't." Maine said with a shit-eating grin, "I have Hawaii 2."

"Maine, did you legalize some drugs recently? I think you might be on some," Hawaii said. Maine looked offended.

"You wound me, sister. We don't need drugs to act like we're on them." Maine stated, causing me to burst into laughter.

"That is true. Want to explain what you're talking about, though?"

"No," Maine replied, causing Hawaii to let out a frustrated sigh before she grabbed her phone.

"I'm going to Google it then." She said, causing Maine to try and

grab her phone, initiating a small fight between the two. America ignored them and proceeded to Google "Hawaii To Maine" and got a bunch of flight information.

Wait, he's a dumbass.

America then proceeded to Google "Hawaii 2 Maine".

"Why the fuck did Cards Against Humanity buy an island in Maine and rename it Hawaii 2."

Maryland-PETA and Old Bay Fighting on Billboards

"PETA can't be serious about Marylanders giving up crabs, right?" America heard Delaware ask as America walked past Maryland's room.

"I mean, if PETA thinks you'll give up chicken, they'll think Maryland will give up crabs," Virginia added. America poked his head into Maryland's room just as she spoke.

"Thank goodness for Old Bay, fighting back the way they are," Maryland said.

"Old Bay is fighting PETA? How? Are they sending people to fistfight each other in a Denny's parking lot?" America asked. The states snorted before Delaware and Maryland broke down into laughter.

"They aren't, but now I really wish they were. Mary, we should try to set that up," Virginia said, to my surprise. She was always the mature one, and joining in on her siblings' hijinks wasn't very common.

"Then what are Old Bay and PETA doing?" America asked.

"Arguing via billboard," Maryland explained with a shrug.

"PETA's trying to convince Marylanders to become vegan and not eat crabs. Old Bay is saying that Marylanders should eat crabs and make sure to put Old Bay on said crabs." Delaware explained. America snorted.

"Marylanders giving up crabs? The likelihood of that happening is about as likely as Michi and Hio saying they like each other." He remarked.

"I know! They even set up signs telling us not to eat chicken! I'm Delaware! Why the fuck would I give up chicken!" Delaware said, causing Virginia to laugh.

"The only two animals on these billboards are the only two animals that anyone in Delmarva will never give up, which makes the entire thing funnier," Maryland said.

"So PETA's being an idiot, and Old Bay is your hero?" America asked. Maryland smiled.

"Dad, Old Bay has always been my hero."

Massachusetts-Great Molasses Flood

"Mass? Why are you covered in molasses?" America asked, trying to keep a laugh out of his voice as he looked at his son, who was covered head to toe in molasses, and looking significantly more pissed off than he usually did. Did one of his siblings do that to him?

"A tank of molasses exploded in Boston and flooded the street," Massachusetts explained. A flood of molasses. That must have been a sight to see. As he imagined that, America gave a little laugh, causing Massachusetts to glare at me.

"A lot of people are dead, Dad." He said. America's mood became somber, and he sighed.

"Oh. I'm sorry. It wasn't the answer I was expecting. I thought York might have done it. Are you okay?" America asked. Massachusetts shook his head.

"Being stuck neck-deep in molasses was awful. I thought I was going to drown. It was so sticky and hard to get out of and-" Massachusetts said quietly, his breath hitching. America went to hug him, ignoring the molasses that stuck to him.

"I'm sorry that you had to deal with that molassacre," America said. Massachusetts groaned.

"Really? Now?" He asked. America smiled apologetically.

"Sorry. I couldn't help myself."

"I'll forgive you if that doesn't become the name for that incident."

"I'm sure it won't. Now I'm stuck to you, so let's get someone to help separate us." America said. He probably should have thought this through more. Molasses is very sticky.

"DAD YOUR SHITTY PUN IS A NAME FOR THE MOLASSES FLOOD! FUCK YOU!"

Michigan-Pig running for Mayor against two criminals during the Flint Water Crisis.

"There's a pig running for mayor of Flint," Michigan said, walking into the room. This prompted America to slam his hands down on the table.

"FUCKS SAKE! First, it was Cali, then Alaska, and now you? Stop electing animals as mayors!" America said with a resigned sigh before groaning.

"Well, I mean, the other option is a criminal," Michigan added, prompting America to groan again.

"Michigan, why is this your mayoral election?" Michigan shrugged.

"I mean, it could be worse." He said. America raised an eyebrow.

"You have a pig and a criminal running for mayor." He deadpanned. Michigan shrugged again.

"Ex-criminal, technically. And yes, it could be worse. We could have an Ohioan running for mayor." Michigan said.

"Michigan Ohioans are not worse than criminals," America said, knowing Michigan wouldn't listen. America had told him this a hundred times already.

"Fuckeye and his people are worse than criminals. Are you going to forget about how he tried to kill me and stole Toledo?" Michigan said, crossing his arms.

"I'm not going to get into this argument. Have fun with your election, and for fucks sake, don't elect a pig."

Minnesota-3 year old Mayor

"Dorset's new mayor is adorable!" America heard Minnesota say as she updated herself on recent events in her state.

"That's a weird word to describe one of your mayors," America commented as he stretched and tried not to fall asleep.

"I mean, he is three," Minnesota said. What the fuck? Why does America trust these guys to run elections again?

"And I am more sleep-deprived than usual, or are you just as bad at electing mayors as the rest of this family?" America asked, hoping that he might have misheard her.

"If I say you're sleep-deprived, will you not be disappointed in me?" Minnesota asked, causing America to sigh.

"Why can't anyone have normal mayoral elections?" America asked, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes.

"Uh, 'cause it's boring? And annoying you is fun." Minnesota explained. America sighed.

"That seems about right. Anyway, I'm going to sleep because maybe in my dreams, this family will be normal," America said, standing up. Minnesota snorted.

"Well, I'm taking that as a challenge. Prepare to see me in your dreams, Dad."

Mississippi-Banning Sesame Street

"I can't believe you're watching that offensive show! It'll poison the minds of children!" Mississippi screamed from the next room. America rubbed his head and prepared for the oncoming headache as he made his way to the room.

"Fuck you, Sippi, you're just being a racist asshole!" America heard New York yell back.

"People aren't ready for that kind of show! Its influence could be used for evil purposes. I won't allow it!" Mississippi argued back.

"What is going on here?" America asked, entering the room. New York and Mississippi glared at each other while Wyoming and New Mexico sat on the couch, and Sesame Street played in the background.

"The Yankee is watching an offensive show." Mississippi accused. America stared blankly at her.

"It's a show that teaches things to preschoolers." America said, raising an eyebrow, "How is that offensive?"

"That's my point! Besides, if anyone needs a show that teaches things, it's Sippi." New York remarked, causing Mississippi to punch him.

"Fuck you!" She cried at the same time America yelled, "Sippi!"

"Sippi, you can't ban a show for preschoolers! And you can't punch your brother!" America said.

"Glad you see I'm high on your list of priorities." New York said, holding his sleeve to his nose to stop the blood flowing.

"No! I am not unbanning that offensive show!" Mississippi said, crossing her arms.

"Sippi, literally everyone is mad at you because you banned it. Why do you think we're watching it now?" New Mexico said, raising her eyebrow.

"Yeah. Unban the show Sippi." Wyoming said.

"Fuck you all!"

Missouri-Honey War

"Hey, Dad, where can I put these beehives?" Missouri asked. America stopped what he was doing.

"Beehives? Why do you have beehives?" He asked.

"Some of my people were trying to collect taxes, but the people wouldn't let them, so we took the beehives as compensation," Missouri explained.

'The land belonged to the Iowa Territory, not Missouri!' Iowa Territory yelled, causing America to sigh.

"Does this relate to your border conflict with Iowa Territory?" He asked. Missouri looked slightly guilty before his face hardened.

"Maybe. But it's my land," Missouri insisted. America sighed. He hoped this didn't end like the Toledo War, with Iowa Territory hating Missouri for the rest of her life.

"Missouri, try to avoid starting conflicts with Iowa Territory before we resolve the border issue," America said.

"So I shouldn't've sent my militia?" Missouri asked.

"You sent your militia?!" America asked, shocked, "Missouri! We don't need a repeat of the Toledo War!"

'He's not respecting the borders between him and me.' Iowa Territory chimed her, voice furious.

"Sorry, Dad, but my governor wanted to protect the tax collector. It's fine. We won't repeat the Toledo War." Missouri promised.

"I don't trust you not to, so I'm going to see if I can get Congress to interfere before things get out of hand," America told him. Missouri shrugged.

"Fair enough. But I'm keeping the beehives."

Montana-Horse in a Hotel

"Some idiot just got himself shot because he wanted to take his horse to his hotel room," Montana said. America groaned as he realized he was about to be told a story he wouldn't like hearing.

"What happened?" America asked in a resigned voice.

"Cowboy wanted to take his horse into the Grand Union Hotel and got into a gunfight with the manager. He died, and they found fourteen bullets in his body." Montana explained. Well, that's not a situation America ever expected to happen.

"With the manager?" America asked, "He got into a gunfight with the manager of all people?"

"Yes. You shouldn't mess with managers in my state." Montana said with a smile.

"You shouldn't get into gunfights with managers in general," America told her, trying to process the strange story.

"I mean, the manager did refuse to let him ride his horse in his hotel room." Montana tried to reason.

"That's not a good reason to start a gunfight!" America argued, throwing his hands into the air.

"Sure it is."

"MONTANA!"

Nebraska-Making Queen Elizabeth the Second a Nebraska Admiral

"Queen Elizabeth the Second has command over my navy. She's an admiral." Nebraska announced.

"You don't have a navy," Iowa said instantly.

"How do you make the Queen an admiral of a state?" Vermont asked.

"Don't we hate the British?" Colorado commented.

"We do." Oregon responded, before turning to Nebraska, "What the fuck Braska."

"You are a triple landlocked state," America stated. Nebraska looked around at all of them.

"None of you are very much fun. I hope you realize that." Nebraska said.

"I know I'm not fun. Now, do you want to explain why you've made the Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland an Admiral of your non-existent navy?" America asked. Nebraska grinned.

"Why not? It's funny." Nebraska responded.

"Also incredibly confusing," Colorado added.

"We should tell your dad," Oregon said, turning towards America.

"No. First, Dad doesn't know you exist, and you want to keep it that way. Second, there is no way in hell Dad's ever going to find out about it," America said.

"I'll use my navy to force you to tell him." Nebraska threatened. America rolled his eyes.

"I'm shaking in fear." America deadpanned.

"I knew you would be terrified of the might of Nebraskan goldfish."

Nevada-Area 51

"I know what they're planning, but what do you expect me to do? I'm not going to be the idiot that tries to stop them. That's Dad's job. Or DC's." America heard Nevada say. Since it sounded suspicious and he knew what his kids were like, America decided to see what he was up to.

"Hey, Vada," America said, walking into the room. Nevada looked nervous, a phone held to his ear.

"I'll call you back," he said before hanging up. "Hey, Old Man. What do you need?"

"What are you doing?" America asked. Nevada smiled.

"Planning on reading Area 51 with everyone else. Of course, Area 51 doesn't know that, and they want me to make sure my siblings don't do that." Nevada explained. America snorted.

"You're siblings would never listen to you. Noi might have been the one who joined the mafia, but you definitely know the mafia. Wait, the mafia isn't coming to Area 51, are they?" America asked as a sudden realization came to him. Nevada snorted.

"Why would the mafia do that?" Nevada asked.

"Because you can make people do crazy things, that's why," America told him. Nevada answered with a shrug.

"Fair enough. Although I will admit, I'm surprised you aren't going to try and talk us out of this." Nevada remarked.

"None of you listen to me," America stated. Nevada shrugged.

"True. Don't worry about the Area 51 raid anyway. Nothing bad will happen." America crossed his arms.

"The last time you said that, it ended with Apple almost falling off the Empire State Building," America said as Nevada rubbed the back of his neck.

"Yeah....but this will go much better, I promise!"

"Just call me if anyone gets stuck on a national landmark again."

New Hampshire-Wolfman

"I'm not traumatizing children by having a man with a gun chase them." America heard New Hampshire say as he walked by a room.

America groaned.

"Hamp, that's exactly how you traumatize someone, especially children," America said as he walked into the room. He couldn't believe he was giving this lecture again.

"Hamp, from personal experience, I can tell you that chasing kids with a gun is going to traumatize them," DC said. New Hampshire looked offended.

"Don't worry. It's just a tourist thing. It's all in good fun," New Hampshire explained.

"Like the pirate thing I have in Lewes where a man chases a pirate boat with a water gun, and the kids get to fight him off with water cannons," Delaware said.

"Water guns make sense, but an actual gun?" DC asked, turning towards New Hampshire, who shrugged.

"Hey, at least it doesn't use real bullets," she said. America sighed. That was something, at the very least.

"It's a gun! That you're pointing at children!" DC said. Delaware laughed.

"Come on, Dee. It's not that bad. It's all supposed to be for fun, so if someone really couldn't handle it, they'd take them off. You don't need to be so uptight all the time just because you're the capital," Delaware said.

"Yeah, but all of you come up with really bad ideas that end with someone almost falling off the Empire State Building!" DC said. That was a fair point. The states were good at coming up with "good" ideas that normally ended badly.

"ONE GODDAMN TIME DEE!" Nevada yelled from somewhere else in the house, causing New Hampshire and Delaware to snicker.

"Dee, not all of our plans end that way." New Hampshire said, "It's fine, even if it is a bit odd."

"Just get off their back, Dee. You know just as well as I do that they aren't going to stop it. Let 'em have their fun. They know what they're doing." America said.

"We do?" Delaware asked, causing New Hampshire to elbow him in the side, "Ow, geez, Hamp, I was only joking."

"I know." New Hampshire responds with a smile.

"Then why'd ya hit me?" Delaware asked, rubbing his side.

"It's funny."

"New England really is full of assholes."

New Jersey-Suing New York over Ellis Island

"Dad, I'm suing New York." New Jersey announced, marching into America's office. Well, at least New Jersey was just suing him instead of attempting to declare war like some other states would have tried.

"You are? Why?" America asked. New Jersey scowled.

"Because he didn't show up for court last time! Because he's taken my land! Because even though we split the Hudson River and I gave him Staten, Ellis, and Liberty Island, he's still been a complete asshole!" New Jersey said.

"FUCK YOU THE DIRT I ADDED WAS MINE!" New York yelled, bursting into the room.

"What?"

"I added land onto Ellis Island from my state, and now New Jersey is trying to claim it as his!" New York accused, causing New Jersey to attempt to attack him. America grabbed New Jersey and pulled him back before sighing.

"I thought we solved your border dispute," America said with a groan.

"We did until York decided to expand Ellis Island!" New Jersey argued.

"With my dirt, which means it's my land!" New York argued back. America groaned and rubbed his forehead. This was going to cause one hell of a headache.

"This is going to the Supreme Court, and for fucks sake, show up this time York."

New Mexico-Parties fight on the Plaza.

"THE PARTIES ARE FIGHTING!" New Mexico yelled, bursting into the room. America stared at her.

"New Mexico, the parties are always fighting," America stated.

"I mean, the parties got into a gunfight."

"WHAT?" America said, shocked, "Goddamnit."

"Nine people are dead now, and soldiers had to be sent to help out." New Mexico added on.

"At least there's no way that situation can get worse," America muttered. New Mexico held up a hand.

"Actually, it can!" She said, sounding way too cheery. America groaned.

"What now?"

"The judge that was supposed to investigate said that investigating was too hazardous to his health, so no one is being prosecuted." New Mexico added on.

"Why? Why does shit like this have to happen?"

New York-Removal of Hell Gate Rocks

"I'VE FINALLY DONE IT! AFTER SEVENTY YEARS!" America heard New York's triumphant and slightly hysterical cry echo throughout

the house. Well, that sounds like something he should be concerned about. America stood up from his chair and walked over to the room New York was in.

"What did you do?" He asked. New York laughed something that sounded both strained and relieved.

"I finally removed all of the Hell Gate rocks—every last one of them. We just blew up Flood Rock today. Three hundred thousand pounds of explosives." New York said as he collapsed into America's arms.

"That's what that was?" New Jersey asked, entering the room, "I was in Princeton, and I think I felt that explosion. You really don't half-ass things, do you, Yorkie?"

"Don't call me Yorkie." New York muttered, his voice muffled since his face was buried in America's shirt.

"Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie. Yorkie." New Jersey repeated as he walked out of the room. New York groaned and gave New Jersey the middle finger.

"Are you going to stand up now, or are you planning on staying there?" America asked New York.

"I'm tired. That project took forever, and since I was working on it a lot, it took a lot out of me. Now I just want to sleep." New York mumbled. America laughed and picked New York up.

"I'll take you to your room, Apple. Go to sleep. I'm glad you had your fun blowing up rocks."

"Yeah, blowing up rocks is fun. The real question is when I'll be allowed to blow up Jers," New York mumbled.

"You're not blowing up Jersey," America said.

"You say that now, but it's Jers. You'll let me blow him up someday."

North Carolina-The Frying Pan Tower

"Dad, is it okay if I leave for a week and stay in Frying Pan Tower?" North Carolina asked, walking into the room.

"What's the Frying Pan Tower?" America asked.

"It was an old coastguard station. Now it's a B&B, and I want to stay there for a week," North Carolina explained.

"Where is it?" America asked.

"39 miles southwest of Southport, in the Frying Pan Shoals," she answered. It's in the ocean, so it's no wonder she's asking for permission; she's probably not going to be able to contact anyone.

Maybe America should consider going there during election season.

"Why a B&B in the middle of the ocean?" he asked. North Carolina rolled her eyes.

"You know how this family is. I want to ditch them, and I don't want them to be able to get to me easily." She explained.

"Oh, I know why you're leaving, and it's an amazing idea. I mean, why would someone turn an old coastguard station into a B&B?" America clarified. North Carolina shrugged.

"Don't ask me, I don't know." North Carolina said, "It's just one of those weird things our people are so fond of doing."

"I have to go there during election season, though."

North Dakota-Electing a dead guy to the House

"Hey, Dad, you know one of the guys I elected to the House? There might be a bit of a problem," North Dakota said as he walked into the room, rubbing his neck.

"What kind of problem?" America asked. After the year he'd had, he really didn't want to deal with any more problems.

"David Andahl, someone I elected to the House, is...well...well, he's dead."

"Goddamnit. I hate this year with a burning passion. How did you elect a dead guy, and why are you planning on doing about it, Kota?" America asked.

"He died while he was running because of COVID. And we're letting the Republican Party pick a replacement. This isn't the first time it's happened, so we're good on handling it." North Dakota said. America groaned. How on earth did North Dakota elect a dead person before?

"I want to ask how you've elected a dead person before, but I've decided I'm better off not knowing. I'm glad you know how to handle this. Thanks for letting me know, and please don't elect any more dead people." America said. North Dakota smiled.

"I will be making no promises."

Ohio-Lighting the Cuyahoga River on fire 13 times

"Goddamnit, the Cuyahoga River is on fire again," Ohio said, causing America to blink at him in confusion. How do you set a river on fire? And what does he mean again?

"Again?" America asked.

"Yeah, it's the thirteenth time it's happened. It's super annoying." Ohio commented, seemingly unbothered by the fact that he has a constantly on-fire river.

"I think you should be more concerned about that river if it's always on fire. And try to figure out why that river is always being set on fire." America stated.

"I know why it's always being set on fire," Ohio said. America threw his hands in the air.

"Then why aren't you doing anything about it?" America questioned.

"Listen, Dad. The river is polluted, but if the river is polluted, it means the industry is doing well. It's normal. So I'm good with having a few fires if it means my industry is doing well," Ohio

explained. America stared at his son before sighing deeply.

"I'm going to create a government agency that enforces pollution regulations. No matter how "normal" it is to you, a river shouldn't be set on fire thirteen times," America explained.

"Fine. But can I push Bitchigan into the river first?" Ohio asked. America groaned. He hated their rivalry sometimes. Well, most of the time.

"No."

Oklahoma-Longest Jail Term

"I just sent a man to prison for 30,000 years," Oklahoma said as he entered the room.

"30,000 years," America stated, hoping he had somehow misheard that.

"Yes"

"Not even we've been able to live that long! The oldest countryhuman I know of is around two thousand!" America said. Why would Oklahoma send a man to prison for 30,000 years? Why not a life sentence? Why was this their choice of action?

"I'm well aware of that, Dad," Oklahoma said, crossing his arms.

"Isn't that a little excessive?" America asked. Oklahoma shook their head.

"No. The person was a child rapist." Oklahoma responded with anger in his voice. Okay, that asshole definitely deserved 30,000 years.

"Maybe you should add in some more years," America said.

"I wish, but some people are mad at the decision because it's excessive," Oklahoma said.

"Well, I think it's reasonable, and for some reason, people think I

can control the states, so I guess what I say goes."

Oregon-Blowing up a Whale

"I have some advice for you. Don't blow up a whale expecting it to blow the whale into the ocean. It will not work and instead will spread whale pieces over your state." Oregon said as she walked into the room.

"That's oddly specific. You blew up a whale, didn't you?" California asked, pointing their finger at Oregon. Oregon blushed.

"I have the right to remain silent." She said, crossing her arms.

"Ore, why did you blow up a whale?" America asked with a sigh. Why was his family like this? This could be considered America's fault, as he raised them, but he didn't teach them to be this chaotic.

"We needed to get it off the beach. We thought it would go into the water." Oregon protested.

"And it didn't," Washington stated. Oregon sighed.

"And it didn't."

"You're a dumbass," Washington said.

"Shut the fuck up, asshole," Oregon responded.

"So, how badly did blowing up the whale go?" America asked, hoping to stop an argument before it happened.

"A whale piece destroyed a car. That's about as much as I know." Oregon said with a shrug.

"Geez," California said.

"Yeah, so learn from my mistake and don't blow up whales or Uncle Wales," Oregon said. America groaned. He should have seen that pun coming.

"That's a dumb joke," Washington remarked.

"Well, you have a dumb face!" Oregon shot back.

"Both of you are children," California remarked.

"Shut up, Cali!"

Pennsylvania-Beating Hitchbot to Death

"I've murdered a robot!" Pennsylvania announced, causing some of the states to groan and America to sigh.

"Well, at least it's not me." New Jersey muttered.

"I can make it be you." New York said.

"No murdering Jersey Apple. And Penny, what do you mean you murdered a robot?" America asked, as always, slightly concerned for the mental well-being of his children.

"Remember Hitchbot? That thing one of your brother's people made?" Pennsylvania asked.

"I hope you realize how little the word brother narrows it down," America said.

"OK, fair enough. I meant Canada." Pennsylvania clarified, "Anyways, Hitchbot arrived in Philly, where it was stripped and decapitated."

"Penny!"

"What, it's Philly. What do you want me to do?" She asked.

"Not kill my brother's robot! Penny, he's going to get mad at me for this!" America said, groaning.

"So the robot hitchhiked across Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands and is an internet sensation and you just killed it?" New Jersey asked. Pennsylvania nodded.

"Well, at least she didn't murder any of us. Have fun dealing with your angry brother, Dad." New York said before leaving the room.

America groaned.

"Penny, no more robot murders."

Rhode Island-The Big Blue Bug

"Rhode, what the fuck is that?" America heard Kansas say. He looked at the two states to see Rhode Island holding a hideous blue bug plush toy.

"It's Nibbles Woodaway. Well, a plushy version of him." Rhode Island.

"What does the actual one look like?" America asked. Rhode Island smiled.

"He's a nine-foot-tall, fifty-eight-foot-long blue termite that overlooks I-95," Rhode Island explained. What the hell? Who makes a giant blue termite? Why would you make one?

"That sounds hideous. What the fuck is wrong with you." Kansas asked.

"Nibbles Woodaway is an amazing feature of my state! How dare you insult him!" Rhode Island said.

"You small states need to get a life instead of making giant bugs," Kansas responded.

"Rhode, I don't care about you making giant bugs, but can you at least make them look nice and not like creatures of my nightmares?" America asked.

"Nibbles Woodaway does look nice!" Rhode Island protested.

"It's hideous."

"This family is awful. I should have stayed out like everyone thought I would."

"Shut up, Rogue's. We're doing this for your own good." Kansas said.

"And for my mental well-being, I really don't need any reminders that Nibbles Woodaway exists."

South Carolina-Raining Creamer

"Dad, it's raining creamer in one of my towns." South Carolina said.

"How the fuck does that happen? Why doesn't it rainwater? Why are you states always having the weirdest rains?" America questioned quickly. He can't believe this is happening again. America thought the eels were bad enough, but creamer?

"The plant had exhaust vent issues and released the creamer power into the air. Then it rained creamer." South Carolina said with a shrug.

"I hope you're planning on fixing that," America said. South Carolina rolled her eyes.

"Of course, I'm planning on fixing it! I'm not going to let my people breathe in creamer. Why would you think I would do that?" South Carolina said.

"Because all of you are really weird and crazy. Plus, I don't understand you states sometimes." America said.

"Ok, I will agree that we are crazy, but I'm not going to let it rain creamer forever." South Carolina said.

"I WOULD!" Florida yelled from somewhere in the house.

"Of course he would." America sighed.

South Dakota-Meth, we're on it.

"So I've started a new project, and it has an amazing slogan," South Dakota said, walking into the room where America was having a conversation with Vermont. America turned his attention to her, as he was always interested in the things his states did independently, even if some of them were...unique.

"What's the slogan?" Vermont asked.

"Meth, we're on it." South Dakota said with a serious look on her face. Vermont burst out laughing as America stared at South Dakota in disbelief.

What kind of slogan was that? Was South Dakota doing meth? Probably not, but why would that be the slogan if she wasn't? What...what was happening?

"Dak, what the fuck are you doing?" America asked as soon as he found his voice, hoping to get an answer as his stunned brain continued to process the information given to him. Who the fuck has a slogan that's 'Meth, we're on it'? Unless they're on meth, which America sincerely hopes South Dakota isn't doing.

It's days like this when America regrets being a dad.

"Meth, apparently," Vermont said before he burst into laughter once more.

"I'm not on meth, it's the slogan for my government's anti-meth actions." South Dakota explained, which only confused America more.

"Dak. Why the fuck is that the slogan for anti-meth stuff?" America asked. South Dakota shrugged. America pinched the bridge of his nose and sighed.

Why were his kids like this?

Tennessee-Hung an elephant

"Dad, if someone were to hypothetically hang an elephant, do you think it's animal cruelty?" Tennessee asked. Well, that's definitely not a hypothetical question. America sighed.

"Nesse, what did you do?" America asked.

"I think we both know."

"*Why*?" I asked.

"She killed a keeper, so we had her executed," Tennessee said.

"I think there are much more effective ways to kill an elephant than hang it." America said before he was hit with a realization, "Wait, how'd you even manage to hang an elephant?"

"Industrial derrick," Tennessee responded. America nodded.

"Now, don't tell Florida about this because he will try it, and I really don't want to deal with that," America said. Tennessee shrugged.

"I won't tell him, but you know he'll figure it out anyway."

Texas-The Texas Archive War

"So, how do you like being an American state?" America asked Texas.

"It's more dysfunctional than I thought it would be," Texas remarked. America laughed.

"No country functions perfectly well. We're all dysfunctional." He said.

"You're probably right. I once had a war with myself over moving my archives," Texas said. America turned to face him.

"You what?" America asked. Texas nodded.

"Someone shot at the people moving the archives with a cannon," Texas added, sounding way more excited than he should. America sighed.

"Texas, you are going to fit into this family so well," He remarked. Texas smiled, but he also seemed a bit nervous.

"Should I be concerned that a dumb thing I did is going to make me fit into the family?"

"Probably."

Utah-Banned the UN

"Dad, you should probably take a message to UN for me," Utah said,

approaching America, who groaned.

"What did you do?" America asked.

"I didn't do anything. One of my towns, however, just banned the UN." Utah said. What the fuck? What the *fuck*?

"They did what?" America asked, making sure he heard Utah right because he very much wanted to have heard that wrong because what the fuck.

"Banned the UN."

"*Why?*"

"Apparently, the UN is a threat to the country and an organization made for war and has a goal of killing...uh...I think they said something around 300,000 people a day." Utah answered. Are you kidding me? Do people really think that?

"Holy shit," America said, at a loss for words. Utah sighed.

"Yeah, so tell UN that he's not welcome in LaVerkin, Utah."

Vermont–Put out a warrant for George W. Bush.

"There's an arrest warrant out for President Bush now, just so you know," Vermont said as he walked into the room.

"What? Why?" America asked, confused about how that happened and why he hadn't heard about it.

"Two of my towns felt that he violated the Constitution, so now there's a warrant out for him in those two towns," Vermont responded.

"Why does stuff like this have to happen?"

"Because it's funny, and none of us know what we're doing." Vermont responded, "Anyways, keep President Bush away from my state, and we shouldn't have any problems. Although it would be funny if someone arrested the president."

"You're not arresting the President," America said. Vermont snorted.

"Tell that to the town with a warrant out for him."

Virginia-Pineapples on Christmas wreaths

"Ginny, what monstrosity of a Christmas wreath is that?" America heard Puerto Rico exclaim. America wondered what Virginia's Christmas wreath looked like to get that reaction.

He walked over to Virginia's room to see what America guessed was supposed to be a Christmas wreath, but it had a pineapple and apples on it.

"I agree with Rico. What the fuck is that." America said. Virginia rolled her eyes.

"A Christmas wreath." She said. Puerto Rico gave her an incredulous look.

"What universe are you from?" He asked, causing Virginia to glare at him.

"This is a perfectly acceptable decoration in my state. I don't know why you two find it so weird." Virginia said. Puerto Rico leaned over to America and loudly whispered.

"She's finally lost it."

"I have not lost it!" Virginia said angrily. Puerto Rico smiled.

"Yes, you have. Besides, it was only a matter of time. Everyone else in this family has lost it," he said.

"Rico has a point," America said. Virginia glared at me.

"Not helping Dad."

"Listen, you have your pineapple-apple wreath, monstrosity, but when your siblings mock you, I will not defend you."

Washington-Making it illegal to shoot Bigfoot

"I've created a new law to protect an endangered species in my state," Washington announced as he walked into the room.

"That's nice. Which species?" America asked.

"Bigfoot," Washington responded. America sighed.

"Why did I think I would get a normal answer?" He muttered to himself.

"Because you've deluded yourself into thinking we can be normal," Washington responded without hesitation.

"Yeah, I really have. I forgot you think Bigfoot is real." America said.

"Bigfoot is real!" Washington protested. America snorted.

"Bigfoot's as real as my mental stability."

West Virginia-Asking the USSR for money to fix a bridge

"West, why the hell are you talking to Soviet?" America asked angrily as he saw his daughter and Soviet having a conversation. In his own house! Did West Virginia let Soviet in?

"Oh hey, Dad. Soviet's going to help me fix that bridge the town of Vulcan needs." West Virginia said.

"Oh fuck no, you are not getting money from *him.* I'll make sure your government sends you the money you need." America said, slight anger in his voice. West Virginia nods and turns to Soviet.

"Thanks for the help." She said. Soviet nodded, a small smile on his face.

"It's not a problem. I always enjoy an opportunity to make your father mad," he said before leaving. As soon as he left, America turned towards West Virginia.

"You went to Soviet?!" America accused angrily.

"And East Germany. But don't worry, I didn't talk to his personification!" She quickly reassured America upon seeing his face. America sighed.

"You are the pettiest little shit. Don't pull this stunt the next time one of your towns needs funding."

Wisconsin-Crop Circles

"SUCK IT, XICO I MIGHT OF HAD AN ALIEN LANDING!" America heard Wisconsin yell. America sighed. This happened every time someone thought aliens were in their state. They yell at New Mexico.

America should probably see what this suspected alien landing was about.

"What is it this time, Con?" America asked.

"Crop circles in a cornfield!" Wisconsin exclaimed.

"Are there any other options besides aliens, or are you just going with that because you think it'll make Mex mad?" America asked.

"Both," Wisconsin responded. America sighed.

"Can you figure out what it actually was?" America asked before pausing. "Actually, you know what? I don't trust you to do this because you want to annoy your sister. I'll figure out what it is."

"Dad, has anyone ever told you you're no fun? Because you aren't."

Wyoming-Jackalope Hunting License

"Hey, Dad, I'll be back in an hour. I've got to get my jackalope hunting license." America nodded before he realized what she had said.

"Your what?" America asked.

"My jackalope hunting license," Wyoming repeated.

"The jackalope is a creature your people make up," America said. Wyoming nodded.

"I'm well aware of that fact. It doesn't mean I can't get a jackalope hunting license," she said.

"Why is that a thing, though?" America questioned. Wyoming shrugged.

"Dunno. But it's fun."

"I don't understand any of you states, and I hate it."

Puerto Rico-the Cleaning Cult

"Padre, will you join the Cleaning Cult?" Puerto Rico asked America, who sighed deeply.

"I've had enough cults from the Midwest. What is this?" America asked.

"Unfortunately, it's not actually a cult." Puerto Rico started, causing America to mutter under his breath.

"Why couldn't the territories have been normal?"

"Americans aren't normal." Puerto Rico answered before moving on with his explanation, "It's a cleaning organization that just has cult in the name."

"Why. Just why would they put cult in the name?" America asked. Puerto Rico shrugged.

"They're Americans. We don't like being normal. That's my favorite thing about this country. Now, are you in or not?" Puerto Rico asked.

"No," America said. Puerto Rico rolled his eyes.

"You're no fun, Padre. If you won't join, I'll see if mis hermanos will."

"Please don't get the Midwest involved." Puerto Rico smiled.

"Padre, it's way too late for that. Adiós."

US Virgin Islands-Drives on the left side of the road

"I thought you were a part of Denmark before you joined the Union?" America heard Wyoming ask US Virgin Islands.

"I was, why?" US Virgin Islands answered.

"You drive on the left side of the road," Wyoming answered.

"What? Vee, why do you do that?" America asked, butting into the conversation.

"Yeah, Vee, that's a weird British thing, and you're just a weird French-Danish-American. There's no British there at all." Guam said, pulling herself into the conversation as well.

"Listen, it's the British's fault. They controlled a lot of the vehicles that were on my islands when I was in the Danish West Indies and, therefore, brought over the stupid left-side driving with them. It's not my fault!" US Virgin Islands explained.

"You poor soul. I'm never going to your territory." Wyoming said. Guam snorted, and US Virgin Islands looked offended.

"Oh, come on. Just because I drive a bit differently than you doesn't mean you can ignore me and pretend I don't exist," US Virgin Islands said.

"That way of driving is a problem. I'm going to deal with it the same way Dad deals with his problems: by ignoring it and pretending it doesn't exist." Wyoming retorted.

"Hey!" America said, offended.

"Shut up, Dad, you know Ming's right."

American Samoa-Sent a petition asking for Samoa (the country) to be banned from using that name

"Tama, tell the UN that Western Samoa can't call herself Samoa! Ban her from the name! Just do something to make sure she can't keep calling herself Samoa!" American Samoa said rushing into my room. America sighed—Virginia vs. West Virginia, North Carolina vs. South Carolina, North Dakota vs. South Dakota.

And now it's American Samoa vs. Samoa. At least America had some experience handling this, although the states have never called for the UN before.

"Sam, I can't tell Samoa-"

"Western Samoa." American Samoa retorted, cutting him off. America sighed.

"I can't tell her to change her name. That's her choice. Why does it bother you to the point where you're asking the UN to get involved?" America asked. American Samoa crossed his arms.

"It makes it seem like there is only one Samoa! There are two of us!I won't let her do this! That's why I'm getting the UN involved," American Samoa explained. America sighed again.

"I don't think the UN can make Sam-Western Samoa change her name," He pointed out. American Samoa scowled.

"That's not going to stop me from trying. Now, if you won't tell the UN, I'll send him a petition," American Samoa said before walking out of the room. America sighed.

Name-related rivalries were always so complicated.

Guam-Japanese Soldier In the jungle for three decades

"I just found a Japanese holdout soldier," Guam announced. America groaned. Three decades and the shit was still happening. Why did it still have to happen?

"Is anyone hurt?" America asked. Guam shook her head.

"No. The soldier is in the hospital now, in surprisingly good health." She said.

"That's good. Three decades have passed, and there are still soldiers who believe the war isn't over. I can't believe they can hide out this long," America said. Guam nodded.

"Yeah, they are stubborn. But this man actually knew the war was over." She said.

"He did? Is it the 'die before being captured' mentality?" America asked. Guam nodded, and America groaned. That mentality had and still does make everything more complicated than it needs to be.

"Three fucking decades, he's aware the war has ended, and they still refuse to surrender," America said.

"Yeah, it sucks. But at least I only found one holdout soldier, as opposed to Mariana." Guam said. America groaned again.

"Don't remind me of that insanity."

Northern Mariana-Queen of Anatahan

"There's a small colony of Japanese soldiers on one of my islands who were fighting and killing each other over a woman who they later decided they had to kill." The Northern Mariana Islands said, walking into America's room.

"What the fuck?" America said as he tried to process the bizarre information he had just received.

"Yeah, we're going to try to convince the soldiers to surrender, but they'll probably refuse to believe the war is over like most Japanese soldiers." Northern Mariana Islands said.

"Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait, are we just going to skip over the 'murdering each other for a woman they then try and murder' part?" America asked. Northern Mariana Islands looked at him.

"Yes." She said. "Anyways, hopefully, we can find the families of who is there and get their families to tell them the war is over and __"

"Why are we skipping over the murder bit?" America asked.

Northern Mariana Islands sighed.

"Because the murder bit isn't important. The important part is getting those soldiers to surrender." She said. America cannot believe she just said murder isn't important. America knows where she's coming from, but still.

"I feel like murder is always important, but I see your point."

"Great. Now help me get a bunch of murderous lovesick idiots off my island."

District of Columbia-High School using the Washington Monument as a prank

DC was laughing harder than America had ever seen her.

"Should we be concerned?" Maryland asked. Virginia and Delaware shrugged.

"I don't know," Delaware said.

"Dee, what are you laughing about?" America asked.

"Some high schoolers turned the Washington Monument purple!" She said.

"Wait, did they really?" Virginia asked. DC nodded.

"They used lights and convinced the Department of the Interior it was an experiment." DC began before laughing much harder.

"Wait, I remember you telling me about someone doing an experiment there!" America exclaimed. DC smiled.

"I might have been in on the prank."

"Dee, I thought you were the mature one," Maryland asked. DC shook her head.

"I'm the only one, aside from the Thirteen Colonies and Vermont, who can act maturely," she answered.

"Regardless of your maturity, please refrain from turning national monuments purple in the future."

"I will make no promises, Dad."

New Sweden Tumblr Story

So me, ApeculiarChild2, Vermont_Republic, ItsArKanSaw and NewLostIslands all started role playing on Tumblr and I've put the finished result (with some grammatical edits) here. The names of what said what is under the name of the blog, so for reference the50thkid is APeculiarChild2, the-first-state is me, and michigamme is NewLostIslands. The other two you'll know. Anyways, I hope y'all enjoy this!

the-first-state
"I think I gave myself a headache. I thought too much about New Sweden." Delaware said, pressing a hand to his forehead.

the50thkid
"Ladybug, don't do that if it hurts you. I really hate seeing any of you hurt." Hawaii said. Vermont, who was on the other side of the room, nodded at that.

the-first-state
"I know it's just...I wish I remembered more. I...I think...talking to Netherlands kept bringing up memories. And...I want to figure out how I died last time. It's just been bothering me. I can't remember what happened in the months leading up to New Sweden's-my death, and it bothers me." Delaware said with a sigh.

the50thkid
"I'll see if I can get Ame to tell me anything. He'll know better than any of us." Hawaii responded.

the-first-state
"I think York would know, if he remembered. He's forgotten how Nya Sverige died too." Delaware said as his eyes grew distant.

the50thkid
"But what if you find something you don't want to know? They say ignorance is bliss for a reason." Hawaii pointed out.

the-first-state
Delaware sighed. "I...I...I don't know."

the50thkid
"I never want you to hurt yourself. Not after everything we've been through together. But I will also try to help you if you decide to keep pushing for it." Hawaii told him.

the-first-state
"I...I think...I...." Delaware's voice trails off, and he buries his face in his knees, clutching his head as he rapidly began to mutter something under his breath in Swedish.

the50thkid
"Ladybug, are you okay?" Hawaii's eyes widened in shock at her brother like this.

the-first-state
"Varför minns jag inte rätt? Vad hände? Jag tror..." (Why do I not remember correctly? What happened? I think...) Delaware said before his eyes became distant, not focused on anything.

the50thkid
"Out of all the Europeans to come to my land, why not any Swedes?" She muttered to herself, reaching a hand to him. "Ladybug, I can't understand you. English? Español? Even God-Forsaken French?"

the-first-state
"Det gör ont! Fader det gör ont! Jag behöver ... jag behöver ... snälla hjälp mig det gör så ont." (It hurts! Father it hurts! I need ... I need ... please help me, it hurts so much.) Delaware said as tears began slowly falling down his face, which was twisted in pain. His hands were also clutching his hair in a tight grip.

the50thkid
"Shhh," Hawaii said, her face softening in sadness. She then sat up, a plan in mind. She took out her phone, and began typing. "As much as I hate this, it'll have to do."

"Var började det göra ont?" (Where did it start to hurt?) She said, in

really weak Swedish. "Du känner igen mig, eller hur?" (You recognize me, right?)

the-first-state
Delaware's head slowly lifted upwards, before looking at Hawaii. "Nej ... nej det gör jag inte. Är du en ny koloni ... en av min fars? När föddes du? Varför har du en annan flagga?" (No ... no I do not. Are you a new colony ... one of my father's? When were you born? Why do you have another flag?)

the50thkid
She aggressively started typing again, and found what he was saying.

"A colony... My god." She said, and sighed. A couple seconds later, she read it again. "Jag är född 1795. Min flagga är min egen. Jag är inte en koloni, bara en vän." (I was born in 1795. My flag is my own. I'm not a colony, just a friend.)

the-first-state
"1795? Du menar 1595? 1795 har inte hänt än. Och vad menar du vän? Känner du min far? Och varför känns mitt huvud som om det slogs mot en sten?" (1795? You mean 1595? 1795 has not happened yet. And what do you mean friend? Do you know my father? And why does my head feel like it was hitting a rock?) Delaware asked, staring at Hawaii in curiosity, one hand held to his head.

the50thkid
"Jag är en vän du vet, från en annan tid. Vilket år är det?" (I'm a friend you know, from another time. What year is it?) Hawaii said, frowning. "Jag ska hjälpa dig, Ladybug." (I'll help you, Ladybug)

the-first-state
"Det är 1643. Alla vet det. Och vad menar du en annan gång? Hur vet jag att jag kan lita på dig? Hur vet jag att du inte är här för att skada mig eller min far!" (It's 1643. Everyone knows that. And what do you mean another time? How do I know I can trust you? How do I know you're not here to hurt me or my father?) Delaware said before he looked around the room for the first time.

His eyes widened, and they filled with panic and fear as he dropped

his hand from his aching head. He turned to face Hawaii.

"Var är vi? Kidnappade du mig? Tog du min far också? Far! Far! FAR! Är du här?" (Where are we? Did you kidnap me? Did you take my father too? Father! Father! FATHER! Are you here?) Delaware said, his voice growing panicked and desperate.

the50thkid
"Delaware!" She said, grabbing him by the arms. "Du är säker här. Jag kommer aldrig att låta någon skada dig. Okej?" (You're safe here. I will never let anyone hurt you. Okay?)

"Jag är din syster. Lita på mig." (I'm your sister. Trust me.)

the-first-state
Delaware looked at her, eyes wide with panic.
"Nej! Du har inga bevis! Jag kommer inte att lita på dig! Var är far? Hur kom jag hit? Vem är du och vem är Delaware?" (No! You have no proof! I will not trust you! Where is father? How did I get here? Who are you and who is Delaware?)

He said, trying to pull his arms out of Hawaii's grip, but upon seeing his arms he stops, staring at them in shock.

"Vad? Varför är mina armar annorlunda? Har min flagga ändrats?" (What? Why are my arms different? Has my flag changed?)

the50thkid
"Din flagga ändrades för ett tag sedan. Jag vet att jag inte har några bevis. (Your flag was changed a while ago. I know I have no evidence)." Hawaii kept hold on her littler brother, and bit her lip "Jag vet att det kommer att bli svårt, men jag behöver att du litar på mig. (I know it's going to be hard, but I need you to trust me)."

"Nya Sverige, eller hur? Tja, ditt land kallas också Delaware. (New Sweden, right? Well, your land is also called Delaware.)"

ask-vermont [Vermont's parentage is not based on my headcanons] "Nya Sverige, jag är Storbritanniens barn, och även en vän till henne." (New Sweden, I am the child of Great Britain, and also a friend of hers.) Vermont pointed at Hawaii. "du kan lita på mig. Kan

du någon engelska?" (You can trust me. Do you know any English?)

the-first-state
"Vem är Storbritannien?" (Who is Great Britain?) Delaware asked, slightly calmer, but still watching the two other states with untrusting eyes.

ask-vermont
"Brittiska imperiet, han får sina barn att kalla honom "Storbritannien", den där självska kuken." (British Empire, he makes his kids call him 'Great Britain', that selfish prick.) Vermont tried to stay calm, Hoping that Delaware wasn't permanently like this.

the-first-state
Vem är det brittiska imperiet?" (Who is British Empire?) Delaware or really New Sweden asked. He was confused and scared and wanted his father. He didn't know who these people were talking about or what they wanted. He was scared.

the50thkid
Hawaii rubbed her temples, "Vermont, what are we going to do? It's UN week. Ame and Sweden won't be back until Monday... Damn him."

She turned to 'New Sweden', and smiled warmly, hoping at least that was universal. "Vill du gå ut i trädgården? Vi har nyckelpigor. (Would you like to go into the garden? We have ladybugs.)

ask-vermont
"Can we crash the meeting? Call America? Get help from New York? Crash the meeting?" Honestly, Vermont just really wanted to crash the meeting

the50thkid
"No! Last time we did that, America told me someone better be dying, bleeding, or already dead when we call. We handle this ourselves." She said stubbornly. "Now come on."

ask-vermont
"I wanna crash the meeting" Vermont frowned, crossing his arms.

"Fine"

the50thkid
Hawaii grabbed Vermont by the arm, and turned to Delaware, typing the words into her phone again. She then stopped, and deeply sighed. "I can't tell him I'm his sister and not call Sweden Father. Ew." She wrinkled her nose. *The price I pay for my siblings.*

"Far är inte hemma än. Han kommer snart hem. (Father is not home yet. He's coming home soon.)"

ask-vermont
"Oh ick. C'est bizarre." (That's weird.) Vermont said, cringing when Hawaii called Sweden "father".

the50thkid
Hawaii smiled, hiding her internal screaming. She elbowed Vermont in the side, and smiled at New Sweden. She took one of the flowers off her lei, and held it to him. "Litar du på mig?" (Do you trust me?)

ask-vermont
"Yeah... Nya Sverige, vad minns du? Kände du igen något av språken jag pratade?" (New Sweden, what do you remember? Did you recognize any of the languages I spoke?) Vermont asked as he sat on the floor next to Delaware.

the-first-state
New Sweden shook his head. "Jag känner inte igen de språken. " (I don't recognize those languages.)

New Sweden have Hawaii a suspicious look. "Jag litar inte på dig än...men jag ska gå ut i trädgården med dig." (I don't trust you yet...but I will go the garden with you.)

the50thkid
Hawaii grinned widely in success as she held out a hand. "Jag heter Hawaii, Nya Sverige. De är Vermont."

the-first-state
"Trevligt att träffas." (Nice to meet you) New Sweden said before

standing up, and putting a hand to his head. "Vet du varför mitt huvud gör så ont?" (Do you know why my head hurts so much?)

the50thkid
Hawaii worriedly placed the back of her hand to his forehead.

"Låt mig kolla upp dig, okej? Tills far kommer tillbaka ska jag försöka ta hand om det. (Let me check you out, okay? Until Father gets here, I'll try to take care of it.)"

the-first-state
New Sweden looked at her, before nodding. "....Okej. Du kan ta hand om det." (okay. You can take care of it)

itsar-kan-saw
"Hawaii where are you oh my lord-"

the50thkid
Hawaii glanced at Arkansas, and sighed. "Arkie, we've gotta keep this low. I don't want a mass panic among the states."

She took New Sweden's hand, and started to pull him to the garden. "Kom igen. Det är här jag odlar mina växter. Minst en av dem borde hjälpa dig. (Come on. This is where I grow my plants. At least one of them should help you.)"

the-first-state
"Vilken typ av växter?" (What kind of plants?) New Sweden asked as he was tugged along.

the50thkid
"Alla sorters saker! (All sorts of things!)" She said, smiling. "A lot is from my homeland. So their names are a little different. "

She kneeled down to pick some ginger. "Detta är ‘Awapuhi. Det hjälper på huvudvärken. (This is 'Awapuhi. It will help the headache.)

the-first-state
New Sweden took it, and stared at it. "Vad ska jag göra med den?" (What do I do with it?)

the50thkid
"Håll det bara. Jag har fortfarande några fler växter att plocka. Du kan inte skynda på det här. (Just hold it. I still have a few more plants to pick. You can not rush this.)" Hawaii smiled, remembering when she was a territory and she had done this same thing. He had asked the same question, only in English.

She collected several plants, then pointed towards the greenhouse. "Låt oss gå dit. (Let's go there)"

the-first-state
"Okej." New Sweden said, following her, "Vad ska du göra nu?" (What are you going to do now?)

the50thkid
"Vi måste blanda ihop allt. (We've got to mash it all together.)" She said, and opened the door, making sure no one was in there.

You could have just used Advil. The nagging part of her brain reminded her. *But we'd risk bumping into one of the other states.*

the-first-state
"Du är nervös." (You are nervous) New Sweden said, noticing her caution.

the50thkid
"Varför skulle du säga det? Jag är inte nervös. Allt är bra. (Why would you say that? I'm not nervous. Everything is fine.)" Hawaii laughed, trying to cover it up. "Jag bara... (I'm just...)"
Out of the corner of her eye, she thought she saw New Jersey. *Not now.*

"Jag måste få mina saker för att göra medicinen. (I need to get my things to make the medication.)" She hurriedly pulled New Sweden deeper in the green house. "Kom nu. (Come on)"

itsar-kan-saw
Arkansas noticed this, and grabbed New Jersey's arm. "Jersey wanna come draw with me? Pleaseeee?"

the-first-state

"Växterna är vackra." (The plants are pretty) New Sweden said, looking around, before spotting something on a plant, "Vad är det?" (What's that?)

New Sweden stuck out his finger as a small ladybug crawled on it, as he stared at the bug in fascination.

the50thkid
"Ladybug." She said quietly, taking the plants they had collected together and placing them on a table. "Det är en ladybug. Hon är snygg, eller hur? (That is a ladybug. She's pretty, isn't she?)"

the-first-state
"Ja. Hon är en vacker varelse. Det påminner mig bara om-" (Yes. She is a pretty creature. It just reminds me of-) New Sweden cut himself off, grasping his head again.

the50thkid
"LADYBUG?" She yelled, dropping her phone on the table and sitting by him. She hugged him tightly. "I'm not losing you. Please come back."

the-first-state
"Mitt huvud gör ont. Jag...något är fel, jag kan känna det. Jag tror...jag tror..." (My head hurts. I...something is wrong, I can feel it. I think...I think....) New Sweden said, leaning into the embrace as whimpers began to escape his lips.

the50thkid
"Screw the meeting, this is important." Hawaii muttered, reaching back for the phone. She hurriedly dialed the number, waiting for a response. "Come on, you bastard, pick up."

the-first-state
"Det gör ont! Nya-Nya Nederländerna? Varför gör det ont?" (It hurts! New-New Netherlands? Why does it hurt?) New Sweden said, as he began crying, his eyes unfocused.

the50thkid
"Oh my god, you're talking about... NEW YORK!" Hawaii screamed, hugging her brother closer to her. "NEW YORK?

The phone finally picked up, and there was a voice on the other end. "Hello?"

"America, I don't care how important that meeting is. You need to come. Ladybug's hurt, he won't stop speaking Swedish, and I'M FREAKING THE FUCK OUT. E ʻoluʻolu e wikiwiki!"

There were a couple gasps and America's voice. "I'll be right there."

itsar-kan-saw
Arkansas could hear her screaming and went to check it out, confused.

the50thkid
"Arkansas, get New York." She said, trying not to shake. She turned back to New Sweden. "Pappa kommer. Han hjälper dig. (Dad's coming. He'll help you.)"

the-first-state
"Det gör ont! Nya Nederländerna! Snälla sluta! Jag vill inte dö!" (It hurts! New Netherlands! Please stop! I don't want to die!) New Sweden was crying harder, curling in on himself.

the50thkid
"Nya Nederländerna är här. (New Netherlands is here.)" Hawaii whispered, then started speaking quickly in Hawaiian, forgetting English. "Nuioka. Ua wela loa ʻo ia ma ke poʻo a ʻaʻole ʻo ia e hoʻōki i ka ʻōlelo Kuekene a... (New York. He's all hot on the head and he won't stop speaking Swedish and...)

New York kneeled next to them, and spoke softly in Swedish. "Nya Sverige?"

the-first-state
"Död jag? Nej...det fanns...någons...allt var mörkt. Var är jag?" (Did I die? No...there was....someone's....it was all dark. Where I am?) New Sweden asked, his eyes becoming more focused.

the50thkid
New York turned to Hawaii, and said. "How long has he been like this? Why didn't you get anyone?"

"I thought I could handle it!" Hawaii said, biting her lip. "America's coming, at least. She hugged Delaware tighter. "This morning, We were talking about New Sweden and he just... collapsed."

"Ladybug?" She whispered. "Det är okej. (It's okay)"

the-first-state
"Jag dog! Jag dog! Jag borde vara död! Varför lever jag?" (I died! I died! I should be dead! Why am I alive?) New Sweden said, crying hard, clinging to Hawaii.

the50thkid
"Du lever." She whispered, and New York's eyes widened.

"Hur dog du?" He asked. "How did you die?"

the-first-state
"Jag kommer inte ihåg! Jag vet att jag är död, men hur mycket jag än försöker kommer jag inte ihåg hur!" (I can't remember! I know I'm dead, but no matter how hard I try I can't remember how!) New Sweden cried.

the50thkid
Hawaii held strong to Delaware, and picked him up 'bridal-style.'

New York tried to take him from her, but she wouldn't let him. "We are going to my room. Please grab my stuff on the table. I'm going to have to get another sedative for him."

"He's my brother too." New York frowned. "I'll carry him."

"No, Apple. I'm the person who caused this, I'm going to fix it." She motioned to the ginger with her head. "Nya Sverige, oroa dig inte. Jag tar hand om dig." (Don't worry, I'll take care of you.)

the-first-state
"Varför är jag inte död?" (Why am I not dead?) New Sweden said, his body shaking.

the50thkid
"You'll be okay." Hawaii carried him towards the house. " Jag ska få något för att lugna dig, okej? (I'll get something to calm you down,

okay?)

"No sedatives." New York said, "I thought you knew that."

"I meant Camomile tea or something, not drugs," Hawaii rolled her eyes. "Sedative is the closest word to what I know from my days as a kingdom."

ask-vermont
Vermont looked at the door as they walked in. "Oh No, that doesn't look good"

the-first-state
New Sweden was quiet, but he stared forwards blankly, seemingly unaware of what was going on around him.

ask-vermont
"What happened now? Nya Sverige, är du okej?" (New Sweden, are you ok?) Vermont asked.

the50thkid
"Get Dee." Hawaii commanded. "Tell her that she's got to come. America's on his way, but it's going to take a little while."

the-first-state
New Sweden closed his eyes, and with a small exhaled sigh, went limp.

the50thkid
"Delly? Del?" America finally came home, and saw the sight of Hawaii carrying New Sweden.

"What the hell happened?"

"My god, you finally came home. Delaware thinks he's still New Sweden, and all of us are freaking out. Then he saw a ladybug and it made it worse." Hawaii set her brother down on the couch. "He's got a fever and a headache. I was collecting ginger for it, and he just collapsed."

"Why didn't you use Advil or something?" America asked.

"Ame, I went into panic mode! Meanwhile, you were at a meeting! You are always at a meeting dealing with other people's problems!" Hawaii raised her voice.

"Bow!" New York interrupted. "This isn't helping Del. You can yell at Dad later."

the-first-state
New Sweden groaned, curling up into a ball

the50thkid
America was at his side in a flash, checking up on him. "York, do you know what's going on? Is it because of the reincarnations?"

New York furrowed his eyebrows. "I don't know, I just found out."

the-first-state
New Sweden's eyes blinked open, and he stared blankly at America.

the50thkid
"Delly, are you okay?" America asked, "Mår du bra? kan du förstå mig? (Are you okay? Can you understand me?"

the-first-state
"Jag förstår dig. Men vem är du?" (I can understand you. But who are you?) New Sweden said, looking around nervously, but relaxing slightly when he saw Hawaii.

the50thkid
"Han är en... vän till mig. (He's a friend of mine.)" Hawaii answered from her phone. "...Och en vän till... far. (And a friend of... Father.)"

America looked up at her, confused, but her face showed that it would be better not to ask.

I swear to Pele I'm going to throw myself in a volcano if I have to call any version of Sweden 'father' again.

the-first-state
"Okej. Kul att träffa dig. Mitt huvud gör fortfarande ont också." (Okay. Nice to meet you. My head still hurts too.) New Sweden said as he closed his eyes as the pain overwhelmed him again.

the50thkid
"York, pass me the ginger." Hawaii said, and softly smiled at New Sweden. "Vad kommer du mer ihåg?" (What else do you remember?)

the-first-state
"Jag minns ... jag minns mitt liv. Jag tror inte att jag kommer ihåg vad du vill att jag ska veta." (I remember...I remember my life. I don't think I remember what you want me to know.) New Sweden said, before sighing. "Förlåt." (Sorry)

the50thkid
"Det är okej. (It's okay.)" Hawaii said. "Vad sägs om människorna du känner? Namnge dem. (How about the people you know? Name them.)

the-first-state
"Jag känner min far,...Nederländerna och hennes dotter, Nya Nederländerna. England, hans son, amerikanska kolonier, Frankrike, Spanien, Danmark-Norge och det finns andra länder, men det är de jag känner till vid namn." (I know my father,...Netherlands, and her daughter, New Netherlands. England, his son, American Colonies, France, Spain, Denmark-Norway, and there are other countries, but those are the ones I know by name.) New Sweden listed, before looking around.

"Jag känner ingen här." (I don't know anyone here.)

the50thkid
Hawaii glanced at New York. *Daughter? New York was a girl in his past life?*

"Det är Amerikanska Kolonier." Hawaii pointed to America. "Han har precis fått en ny flagga. (He just has a new flag.)"

the-first-state
New Sweden looked at America. "Du är längre." (You're taller.)

the50thkid
America could not keep the edge of his lips from curling into a smile. "Tiden har gått sedan jag senast såg... dig." (Time passed

since I last saw... you.)

the-first-state
"Det är sant. Jag har inte sett dig på tre år." (That is true. I haven't seen you in three years.) New Sweden said, before he paused.

"Om du är här, var är England?" (If you are here where is England?)

ask-vermont
"England är just nu hemma." (England is currently at home.) Vermont looked over at America. "Höger?" (right?)

the50thkid
"Höger. (Right.)"

Hawaii watched from the sidelines, looking down. *Should I leave them? They might need time to talk.*

"Ladybug? Jag lämnar dig med honom, okej? Bara för en liten stund. (I'll leave you with him, okay? Only for a little while.)"

the-first-state
New Sweden but his lip and nodded. "Okej."

the50thkid
Hawaii nodded, saluting to America as she was leaving the room.

America sighed. "Så du minns ingenting? Påminner namnet "Delaware" dig om något?(So you don't remember anything? Does the name 'Delaware' remind you of anything?)"

the-first-state
"Den där tjejen-Hawaii-hon sa att vissa människor kallar mig 'Delaware'. Men jag har aldrig hört det namnet förut idag. Och vad menar du, jag kommer inte ihåg någonting?" (That girl-Hawaii-she said some people call me 'Delaware.' But I've never heard that name before today. And what do you mean, I don't remember anything?) New Sweden said, looking apologetically at America.

the50thkid
"Hur är det med Nya Nederländerna? Vad minns du om henne? (What about New Netherlands. What do you remember about her?)"

the-first-state
"Jag ... jag minns att vi är ... jag ... jag ... jag får mer ont i huvudet när jag tänker på henne. Jag tror att något dåligt hände mellan oss." (I...I remember we are...I...I...my head hurts more thinking about her. I think something bad happened between us.) New Sweden said, rubbing his temples.

the50thkid
"Jag kommer inte att ställa fler frågor till dig om du inte vill. (I won't ask you any more questions if you don't want to.)" America said, concerned. "Vad sägs om att se om du kan sova bort huvudvärken? (How about you see if you can sleep off the headache?)"

"Found the Advil!" Hawaii yelled from the other room. She came running in, and proudly presented it. "Even though I still think ginger would be better..."

She passed the bottle to America, and smiled at New Sweden. "Jag hoppas det här hjälper! (I hope this helps!)

the-first-state
"Vad är det där?" (What is that?) New Sweden asked as America took some pills out of the bottle.

the50thkid
"Medicin. (Medicine). New York..." America started.

"Already got the water, Dad." New York called, "Använd vattnet för att svälja det. (Use the water to swallow it.)"

the-first-state
New Sweden nodded and did so. "Nu då?" (Now what?)

the50thkid
"Känner du dig annorlunda? (Do you feel any different?)" Hawaii asked softly.

the-first-state
"Jag antar? Jag tror att smärtan försvinner?" (I guess? I think the pain is going away?) New Sweden said, pressing a hand to his

forehead.

the50thkid
"Bra (Good.)" Hawaii hugged him. "Jag var orolig för dig, bror. (I was worried about you, brother.)"

the-first-state
"Förlåt för att jag oroar dig." (Sorry for worrying you.) New Sweden said, before rubbing at his eyes.

"Jag känner mig riktigt trött nu." (I feel really tired now)

the50thkid
"Sov då. Vi ses i morgon, Nya Sverige. (Then sleep. I'll see you in the morning, New Sweden.)" Hawaii said. She frowned at America and New York. "We all need sleep, as much as I'd rather sit in the garden by moonlight."

"But..."

"America, as a friend and as someone who never gets enough sleep either, you need it." She sighed.

the-first-state
"Okej, jag ska sova. Ska jag göra det här ändå?" (Okay, I'll sleep. Should I do it here though?) New Sweden asked, pointing to the couch he was sitting on.

the50thkid
Hawaii sucked in a deep breath and glanced at America. "What about his room?"

He shook his head quickly. "No. If he relapsed like that over a ladybug, then what would other things he's close to do?"

He smiled at New Sweden. "Om du är bekväm med det så kan du såklart. (If you are comfortable with it, of course you can.)"

the-first-state
New Sweden nodded, and began to curl up on the couch before closing his eyes.

ask-vermont
Vermont looked over. "How are we going to get Delaware back? Or are we going to leave him like this?"

the50thkid
"We are going to try any means possible. We've got to work with this, okay?" America said, pinching his nose. "Vermont, call the others. We're going to have to tell them about it."

"No!" Hawaii said, "We can't! I know one thing, and that's if Delaware isn't Delaware, then nothing will make sense anymore! Everything will descend into chaos!"

"You pretend like that isn't the norm." New York said.

"Vermont, who knows?" Hawaii chose to ignore New York.

michigamme
"HEY," A voice called from the other room,
"Does anyone know if there's any-" The Mitten State stopped suddenly after he saw what was happening.

"-uh, What's going on?"

the50thkid
"Michi, time to pay back for telling me there were Sharks in the Great Lakes." Hawaii said. "Keep this a secret, okay? Dela's not doing so good, and we don't want to cause a panic."

michigamme
"I really didn't think you'd take it that seriously, but okay. Could you at least tell me what exactly is happening?" Michigan asked.

the-first-state
New Sweden let out a groan as his face became distressed, though he remained asleep.

the50thkid
Hawaii put her head in her hands, sighing. "Delaware and I were talking and then he started holding his head and talking in Swedish and I, naturally decided to yell, and Vermont came and Ladybug now thinks he's New Sweden and it's all my fault because I took him

in the garden and then he got worse and-"

"Bow, it's not your fault." New York said, placing a hand on her back. "There's no way you knew it was going to happen."

"So, Mich, you want to be part of this?" Hawaii said, smiling weakly.

ask-vermont
"Uh, Hawaii, to answer your earlier question, Us, Ark, I think I told DC, Now Mich, and uhm- anyone that knows French? I heard people outside while I was panicking... sorry, I ended up being loud." Vermont said, somewhat flinching.

the50thkid
"That's okay. We'll work with what we got" Hawaii turned to America. "We need to figure this out. York, Mont, Ark, I guess Michi, and me. Call me if Dela... New Sweden has any changes."

"Alright. Don't hurt yourselves."

the-first-state
America put a hand on New Sweden's forehead, and New Sweden's face relaxed.

michigamme
"You think he's going to be okay?" Michigan asked, his face showing worry.

the-first-state
America sighed. "I don't know. This isn't the first time this has happened, but still, it worries me every time."

the50thkid
"WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, NOT THE FIRST TIME?" Hawaii's voice went up an octave. "When did this happen before? I don't remember it ever happening!"

the-first-state
"This happens to me and Del from time to time. We don't always remember what happens, but it's rare. Del had a lot of issues with remembering his lives after...the occupation. It's....not fun." New

York said.

"We normally try to keep it on the down low, to prevent them from being overwhelmed by the amount of people in this house. That's probably why you haven't seen it yet. Although, I suppose it was only a matter of time." America said.

the50thkid
Hawaii bit her lip, and sat down. "This reincarnation thing is so weird. Like, it's not Delaware. New Sweden is not Delaware."

"I don't care what relationship I have with you, but Del is a brother to me." Hawaii said coldly. "And I want to help him. Even if it means I had to call Sweden 'father'." She made a face of disgust.

the-first-state
"Oh so that's what that was..." America muttered.

"Yeah the reincarnation thing is weird. It's...hard to explain. But most of the time, once New Sweden goes to sleep, Delaware is the one who wakes up. Hopefully that happens this time. What were you even talking about? Me and Delly talk about our past lives a lot, but that doesn't always lead to this." New York asked as he sat down next to New Sweden, running a hand through his hair.

the50thkid
"We were talking to Netherlands, and then Ladybug said he had a headache, and he wanted to know more. Then I said that I'd ask you" She glanced at America. "And I'd help him find out more. And then I told him ignorance is bliss, and it just went downhill from there."

ask-vermont
"So we just let him sleep?" Vermont was holding the door shut, ignoring New Hampshire banging on the door to be let in.

the-first-state
"Yeah, he'll sleep, and hopefully be fine after that." America said.

the50thkid
"Alright. If this really will help him." Hawaii worriedly said,

watching her brother's sleeping form. "I'm going to end up learning Swedish. I've got so many already, why not another? Plus, it'll be useful if... this ever happens again."

the-first-state
"You might want to add Dutch to that list. I get very panicked when I think I'm New Netherlands." New York said with a small smile.

the50thkid
"It's funny. You'd think after so many years I'd have at least the basics down of either." Hawaii sighed. "It's so weird. I've lived here for what, 130-ish years? And I still find out new things about you guys."

"Oh yeah, before I forget, YOU WERE A GIRL IN YOUR PAST LIFE?"

michigamme
Michigan looked at his older brother vaguely surprised and confused.

"Did I know that? I'm not sure if I did, but now I do, I guess."

the-first-state
"Yeah, New Netherlands was female." New York said with a shrug

the50thkid
Hawaii laughed. "Well, you learn something new every day. I only knew New Sweden and New Netherlands by their names. They were both just stories."

She glanced at America, who was tending to New Sweden. "Aue, American History is weird."

the-first-state
"Trust me there are much weirder things to happen to this family." America said with a smile.

michigamme
"HA. Can confirm with firsthand experience, And I haven't even been around for most of that stuff. But I really doubt that there's ever been any normal part of history ever." Michigan commented.

the-first-state
New York laughed. "No there hasn't."

Then, as if awoken by the laugh. New Sweden's eyes blinked open.

the50thkid
"Ladybug?" Hawaii asked, remembering what she had learned so far. "Mår du bra? (Are you okay?)"

the-first-state
New Sweden rubbed at his eyes, before giving Hawaii a confused look.

"Since when did you know Swedish?" Delaware asked.

the50thkid
"DELLY!" She yelled, hugging him tightly. "You wouldn't believe the shit that just happened. I'm so happy you're okay. I was so scared for you."

She looked on with a stern face. "Never scare me like that again."

the-first-state
"Why? What happened? Did I pass out? Was my headache that bad?" Delaware asked, as he looked around the room.

the50thkid
"You don't remember?" Hawaii said softly, then shook her head. "It doesn't matter. What matters is, you're here, you're safe, and you are Delaware."

She stood up, dusting herself off. "I missed you, Ladybug."

the-first-state
"I am...oh, you met Nya Sverige, didn't you? How long have I been gone?" Delaware asked, directing the last question at New York.

the50thkid
"Don't know exactly. Bow here was freaking out when I got there." New York said cooly.

"I was being perfectly reasonable." Hawaii said, turning up her nose.

"I was just surprised. It was this morning, after we talked to Netherlands. Remember that?"

the-first-state
"Kinda? I think? I hate when this happens, it makes my head all weird. Mixes up the memories." Delaware said, leaning back and rubbing his forehead. New York laughed.

"I know how you feel tweelingbroer. It's not fun." He said.

the50thkid
"It was scary." Hawaii said quietly, looking away. "I was so scared that you-the you I know- was never going to come back. Kaikuaʻana, I was so worried..."

the-first-state
"Sorry." Delaware said, "Didn't mean to make you worry."

michigamme
"Well, I don't really have a reason to be here, But Del, I'm glad you're okay," The Wolverine State said awkwardly, before walking away. "I-Im just gonna go now."

"One more thing, if anyone knows where Indy hid my stash of Vernors and Faygo I'd be much appreciated. Apparently according to her I have an 'addiction' to it, and need to 'stop already' Whatever that means. That's why I came here in the first place. It's also a lot harder to keep someone else on it when you don't have any left."

the50thkid
"Oh, she put it under the sink to the left of the bleach." Hawaii laughed. "I found it while looking for dakine. You know... dakine."

She shook her head. "Dela, how's your head? I still have ginger for it if you need.

the-first-state
"Sore, but that's to be expected. I'm fine for the most part." Delaware said with a small laugh.

the50thkid
"I'm so happy we don't have to speak Swedish anymore..." Hawaii

laughed. "As much as I love other languages, I do not sound good as Sweden's kid."

the-first-state
"…..what?" Delaware asked, confused.

ask-vermont
"What happened was she had to call Sweden 'father' to keep up the act of being your sibling." Vermont said, looking over from the corner he was in.

the-first-state
Delaware began cackling upon hearing that.

the50thkid
"Stop it!" Hawaii said, her face red. "I freaked out, okay? I'd never call AMERICA anything like that, complete offense intended."

She covered her face with her hands. "Last time I'm helping you, assholes."

the-first-state
"Sorry Bow, but that's…that's the best mental image. Especially because Sweden is not New Sweden's father. He's his brother, or nephew. Not really sure on that one. I think Sweden is Swedish Empire's son, but I'm not sure. Delaware said.

the50thkid
"Fuck you all and good night." Hawaii said, throwing her hands in the air. "I am done with all this European nonsense. Have a swell night."

the-first-state
"Night Bow!" Delaware called as Hawaii left the room.

Sleepy Twin

"Apple..." Delaware mumbled as he walked into New York's room. New York looked at the doorway to see his twin rubbing his eyes.

"What's up, Delly?" New York asked, spinning his chair to face him.

"M'tired. But I can't sleep," he said. New York smiled, knowing what this meant. They would always go to the other whenever Delaware or he couldn't sleep.

They slept better together.

"Alright, I guess I can go to bed now," New York said, checking the clock and realizing it was already three am. No wonder Delaware seemed so miserable about not being able to sleep.

"Thanks, Apps," Delaware said. New York sat on his bed, and Delaware immediately walked over and laid down, using his chest as a pillow, even though New York wasn't lying down.

This was the other thing Delaware did when he couldn't sleep.

"Do you have to do this every time?" New York asked, trying to coax Delaware and him into a more comfortable position. His twin nodded.

"Tvillingbröder gör de bästa kuddarna." (Twin brothers make the best pillows,) he said. New York rolled his eyes with a fond smile and tugged at his lips, having finally gotten them into a more comfortable position.

"Good night, little bro," New York murmured into Delaware's hair as he fell asleep.

"I'm the older twin." He whispered back before burrowing his face into New York's chest.

"Ratification doesn't count," New York responded. Delaware's

response was muffled, but New York knew what he was saying.

"Yes, it does."

"Well, past lives should count, which makes me older," New York responded, hugging Delaware. His wings wrapped around him, pulling him closer to New York. Delaware turned his head to the side, probably to speak better.

"Ratifi.." Delaware began, being cut off by a yawn, "Ratification is so much more different than our past lives."

"Yeah, but that's technically us. Kinda." New York tried to argue before yawning. Why did yawns have to be contagious? Delaware laughed.

"No, it's not...baby bro." He said before turning his head again, trying to bury it deeper into New York's chest, like he always did when he was tired. Delaware was so clingy when he was exhausted. It was cute.

"Now you're just being mean," New York said. Delaware hummed, and New York could feel him smile. New York rolled his eyes again before closing them.

If he was going to be stuck with his sleepy twin, he might as well try and get some sleep out of it.

Coffee

Coffee Trio (AKA Washington, Massachusetts, and New York), requested by SmashingAsh98

"Who the FUCK messed with my coffee?" New York yelled as he stomped around the house. Virginia groaned.

"Great, this is exactly what we needed." She muttered before standing up to find New York. Someone had to stop him before he threw someone through a wall again.

Never get between New York and his coffee. Or Washington and his coffee. Or Massachusetts and his (Dunkin's) coffee.

You can get between Dad and his coffee. Dad will just find some other caffeine-filled drink to drink way too much of.

But that Coffee fanatics known as the Coffee Trio? Get between them and coffee, and you will die.

"FUCK! New York, I didn't take your fucking coffee! Sleep for once in your damn life, and then you won't need as much coffee, you power-hungry entitled dick!" Virginia heard New Jersey say, followed by his very colorful vocabulary.

"New Jersey, just tell him if you messed with his coffee," Virginia heard Washington say as she turned the corner to see what was happening. Massachusetts somehow managed to hold New Jersey against the wall, and New York glared at New Jersey with exhausted eyes. Washington stood on the opposite wall, messing around on his phone but clearly still paying attention to what was going on.

"New York," Virginia said, walking over and catching the attention of her four brothers.

"What?" said State snapped, turning to face Virginia, looking one

wrong move from a murder attempt.

"What happened?" Virgina asked. New York scowled.

"My coffee is fucking decaffeinated. And I need caffeine." New York said. Oh, who did that? That was a horrible idea.

"You have an addiction to coffee. So do you, Wash and Mass," Virginia said. New Jersey laughed, and New York's scowl deepened.

"So what if we do? That doesn't give anyone the right to mess with our coffee." Massachusetts claimed. Virginia rolled her eyes.

"Y'all are so dramatic. Listen, York, how much sleep did you get last night?" Virginia asked.

"I didn't sleep last night." He said. Virginia sighed.

"Okay, first, go to sleep." She began before being cut off by New York.

"No."

"And second, are you sure you didn't mess up your coffee because you are tired and cranky?" Virginia asked.

"Yes! And I'm not cranky!" New York protested. New Jersey snorted.

"Then what do you call this then?" The Garden State asked.

"An interrogation." Washington, Massachusetts, and New York responded.

"It's weird seeing you and Mass get along," New Jersey said with a sigh, looking resigned. He was probably expecting to be stuck here for a while.

"I might not like Yorkie all that much, but at least we can agree on coffee," Massachusetts said, and New Jersey smirked.

"What's the best coffee shop?" He asked. Why's he asking that?

"Dunkin' Donuts."

"Starbucks."

"Don't care."

Oh, right, those three are coffee addicts, but they can't agree on coffee shops.

"Washington, I forgot you like Starbucks, and now I'm horrified."

"Listen, Mass I'm Washington State; how can I not like Starbucks? At least I have a favorite coffee shop!"

"Oh, come on, it doesn't matter that much where the coffee comes from!" Massachusetts had let go of New Jersey, who stood up and walked over to me as the argument became more intense.

"Well, that was easy," he said. Virginia rolled her eyes as she turned to leave the fight.

"Did you really mess with Apple's coffee?" She asked. New Jersey laughed and shook his head.

"That was Delly. He's trying to get New York to sleep, so he's sabotaged York's sources of caffeine." New Jersey explained.

"Well, let's hope York doesn't find out about that; otherwise, Delaware will die."

Bonding (non-canon)

This was a collab with ApeculiarChild2 and it was super fun to do. Go check her out if you haven't.

Delaware was looking for something. Or more accurately, someone. He wanted to talk to Hawaii, as she was still acting strange around him and his siblings. So here he was, looking for one small former island nation in a house of fucking insanity.

As that thought crosses his mind, Florida comes flying down the steps, followed by Puerto Rico as the reunited brothers once again stirred something up for their own amusement.

As always, wherever Florida went, pure chaos was sure to follow.

Delaware sighed. He didn't have time for this. But maybe Puerto Rico knew where she was, considering as she had tended to hang around by the territories. It was worth a shot.

"¡Puerto Rico!" Delaware called, causing the Spanish island to turn towards him.

"¿Sí? What is it?" He asked.

"Have you seen Hawaii?" Delaware asked, walking towards him. Puerto Rico nodded.

"Hawaii is outside, in the garden. I think it reminds her of her land. She really likes it there." Puerto Rico answered. Delaware nodded and gave Puerto Rico his thanks before walking towards the gardens.

Just as he had promised, there was Hawaii, sitting alone in the garden. She had her eyes closed, and the wind blowing in her hair. She looked so peaceful, like she was in her natural habitat.

"Hey, Hawaii!" Delaware called, snapping her out of the trance she seemed to be in. She sighed, rolling her eyes as she stood up to face

him.

"Hello... Delaware? Yes, you must be Delaware. You actually have an original flag." She said, her arms folded.

"Seal technically. Haven't gotten around to getting a flag quite yet." Delaware said as he walked closer to Hawaii, who didn't seem to want to let him near her, as she wouldn't let him get too close.

"Because America won't let you?" Hawaii asked, hostility in her tone. Delaware smiled and laughed.

"Nope! Don't feel like it. Designing flags is hard, and I like my seal. Maybe I should put it on a future flag...." Delaware said, trailing off, before he realized what he was doing and got back on task, "Not what I'm here for."

"Then what are you here for?" Hawaii asked, crossing her arms.

"I wanted to see how you were doing." Delaware responded.

"Did America send you?" Hawaii said, her voice still dripping with hostility. "Don't worry, I'm not doing anything wrong. I don't need a babysitter."

Delaware stopped, tilting his head to the side. "Why would you say that?"

"Oh, no reason." Hawaii said, rolling her eyes. "So, you just came to check on me out of the 'goodness of your heart'? How sweet."

Delaware sighed. "Hawaii, contrary to what you think, the people here do actually care. I am visiting you out of the goodness of my heart. You've just isolated yourself since coming here."

"Because I don't want to be here! I shouldn't be here! I should be back in my country, I should still be a country. But I'm not. I'm just your father's precious colony." Hawaii snapped back. Delaware stared at her for a minute, before he began speaking slowly.

"I won't deny you are wrong, but I will say what's done is done, and it doesn't look like it will be down anytime soon. Isolate yourself all

you want, but you aren't just going to be able to leave tomorrow. While you are here, at least try and make a friend!"

"Make a friend? Making friends is what got me into this mess." She said, muttering to herself. "And my only true friends turned against me long ago. Including your father and Alaska."

"Why the hell are you being so standoffish to us? Dad used to always tell us about the friendly, welcoming Hawaii. Where is she?" Delaware asked, raising his voice.

"You're looking at the pathetic remains of her!" Hawaii put on a fake grin and bowed low. "The one and only since 1810! The first indigenous nation who was recognized as a country by Britain, France, and America!"

"But you wouldn't know that, considering you are American." Her voice became uncomfortably low and hostile, and the last word was said like a curse. "Americans always meddle, lie, and believe their country is the best in the world. You all are the same."

"We aren't all the same. That means I would have to be like New Jersey. And I would rather eat a shoe than be like him." Delaware said. Hawaii seemed caught off guard by this, and gave Delaware a confused look.

"What?" She asked.

"Okay maybe that wasn't the best way to explain it." Delaware said, seeing her confusion, "Let me put it this way. You've met Britain and all the countries that make him up, right?"

"Yeah? But what does that have to do with anything?" Hawaii asked.

"Would you say that the countries that make up Britain are all exactly the same?" Delaware asked.

"Certainly not." She said, looking away. "England is much different from Ilelani. I mean Ireland. And Wales... Have you ever seen Wales?"

"Nope, but I've heard of him." Delaware said, "The point is, to call us all the same like that is like calling them all the same. We all have our different qualities."

She stared at him for a while, then sighed. "Why are you so persistent about this? You could just let me isolate myself. How does this benefit you?"

"My family is a very social one. We like being around each other. I understand if you don't want to be around most of us, but at least find someone you can be a friend, so you aren't alone." Delaware said.

"I'm fine with being alone." Hawaii said.

"Are you?" Delaware asked with a raise of his eyebrow. Hawaii turned away.

"If I say I'm fine, then I'm fine." She said, looking back over the garden. "Being alone means I don't have to worry about getting hurt anymore. And you won't have to deal with Miss Imperfect."

"I think I've heard you talk about having to be perfect almost the entire time you were here. What's your obsession with that?" Delaware said

"There is no obsession!" Hawaii defended herself. "I'm a colony. And if I don't hold myself to a standard, I won't be respected."

"Hawaii, half the former colonies that dad has taken in and made territories would not meet any standard. Florida and Alaska had been treated badly by their parent, even if Alaska doesn't realize it, and they both came in with their own sets of issues. I don't mind if you are imperfect. We all are." Delaware said.

"What do you mean Alaska was treated badly by Russia? What did he do to Alaska?" Hawaii asked.

"To be honest, none of us know for certain. Alaska has only opened up to Dad so far. But...it's definitely messed with Alaska's way of thinking." Delaware said, rubbing the back of his neck.

"Sure, Russia's... rough around the edges, but surely he's not abusive, right?" Hawaii tried to reason with him. "Alaska used to be my friend, before all of this. Before he became American."

"You say that like it's a bad thing." Delaware retorted. "And you are an American, whether you like it or not."

"Not if I have anything to say." Hawaii said, "I am Hawaiian. Not American, not British, not French. I was doing well since my independence, but your father decided to take that from me. Just like he took everything."

"Dad did what he thought was best. That's what he always does. He tries to help, even if he doesn't take the best route for doing so. He never meant to hurt you. He genuinely thinks he's helping." Delaware said.

"Well he's not." Hawaii said.

"Then tell Dad that. Don't just ignore us and expect things to change! Talk to someone!" Delaware said, slightly exasperated.

"Don't you think I've tried to talk to him? Before all this happened? He abandoned me. He let Dole make me a Republic." She said coldly. "Guess who's still my governor? I can't speak my language, I can't dance hula. And outbursts don't solve anything. I've tried."

"All I ever see you do is distance yourself, Hawaii." Delaware said, and placed a hand on her shoulder, which she shrugged off. "I want to be a friend. I want you to at least try to make one. Just one."

Hawaii looked away, thinking hard. Then, her eyes lit up a bit. "I make one friend, then you leave me alone? Is that the deal?"

"Yeah." Delaware said, holding out his hand, "It's a deal."

Hawaii took his hand and shook it.

"Now I just need to find someone to befriend." Hawaii muttered.

"Well, you've got choices." Delaware smiled. "We've got California, and they are a little like you, and they are from the west coast. Or

maybe an East coast state? I think you could make friends with anyone. Except for New Jersey."

"Why not New Jersey?" Hawaii asked, curious. "He's not nearly as scary as some of your other siblings."

"Trust me, you don't want to make friends with that asshole." Delaware said, then muttered. "I don't even think you can."

"Is that a challenge?" Hawaii said, a smile creeping on her lips. "I've made friends with nearly every country on the planet. I'm sure I could figure something out. I'll even bet on it."

"What would you bet? Because if you can get NJ to like you, then you are a miracle worker." Delaware said.

"I've got pineapples, sugar, loads of tropical stuff." Hawaii said, thinking. "But those aren't very good gambling chips, are they? How about if I win this bet, you owe me a favor. No questions asked. If you win, I owe you something."

"I'll take you up on that." Delaware said with a smile, "I don't think you can do it, so this should go well for me."

"Your doubt is even better for when I win this." Hawaii laughed. "Easy peasy. I've made friends with Empires, a state only a little bigger than me won't be an issue."

"We both seem pretty confident that we'll win. I guess we'll have to wait and see." Delaware said.

"You really underestimate the power of Aloha, huh?" Hawaii joked, and smiled. She stuck out her hand. "May the best man win. Or, in my case, woman!"

Delaware shook her hand. "May the best person win."

Shot From The Sky

Thank you to NewLostIslands for helping give me inspiration to write this oneshot, which is a gift to them for giving me the base of this angsty headcanon. Lost, hope you enjoy this oneshot I made for you.

General Grant had asked Michigan to fly up and figure out where the cannons should be aimed. They needed this siege to end. Once Vicksburg fell, they could finally cut the Confederacy in half and achieve the second goal of the Anaconda Plan. He was just as eager to end the siege as the others, and not firing blindly would help.

So now Michigan was about ten feet above the Mississippi, examining the city and debating whether he would be safe flying over it.

"On the bright side, it would give us an advantage. On the bad side, I would definitely get hurt flying directly over it. Maybe I can try flying around the outskirts?" Michigan muttered to himself, tilting his head to the side as he tried to figure out what to do.

Michigan heard another gunshot but didn't take much notice of it until blinding pain erupted in his right wing. He screamed as he began to plummet like a stone.

Michigan quickly stretched out his wings, trying to slow the fall, ignoring how that made the pain worse. As his fall slowed, Michigan began to feel lightheaded and dizzy and was starting to have trouble moving his wings.

"Make it to shore, make it to shore," he muttered as he tried to turn toward the shore of the Mississippi so he could land and get medical treatment.

Michigan was too far to make it, not with how high he was above the water. He flapped his wings once, trying to gain more height, but it just made the pain overwhelming. His muscles seized up, and

Michigan fell as everything began fading away. He closed his eyes and fell into unconsciousness, not even feeling his body hit the water.

The next thing Michigan was aware of was a hand running through his hair. Michigan tried to peel his eyes open, but it took too much energy, energy he didn't seem to have. His head was so fuzzy, and he wasn't sure what was happening. Michigan thinks people were talking.

Michigan then groaned as pain began to hit him, centered around his wing. The hand running through his hair stopped, and Michigan let out a little whine, not wanting to lose the comfort.

"....." Had someone spoken? Michigan couldn't tell. His awareness slowly faded, and Michigan felt like someone had tied weights to his limbs. They were so heavy and hard to move.

Not that he wanted to move.

".....ampu...."

The hand was beginning to run through his hair again, and Michigan let out a small sigh as he fell again into unconsciousness.

Michigan had been going in and out of consciousness and never managed to stay awake for longer than what felt like a couple of seconds. This time, however, he was able to stay awake for much longer, although he hadn't moved since waking up.

Michigan was just so lightheaded and hot, and his limbs felt so heavy. There were also voices talking around him, but he didn't care enough to focus on what they were saying.

Michigan finally opened his eyes and tried to focus them on the source of the voices. While his vision was initially fuzzy, he finally realized who it was.

"Mes..mis.." Michigan was cut off from his attempt at speaking as he began coughing, loud, grating coughs that hurt his throat. It didn't

help the lightheadedness.

"Hey hey hey, Michigan, don't speak," Missouri said, putting his hand on Michigan's forehead. His hand was cold and felt so lovely, especially since Michigan was so hot. Against his will, Michigan's eyes began slipping shut.

"Michigan....?" Michigan heard Missouri ask, but everything was already fading away again, and he couldn't make out the rest of the sentence. Michigan slowly opened his eyes and tried to focus his blurry vision on Missouri.

Michigan tried to respond, but his mouth seemed unable to cooperate, and Michigan thought he just ended up making random, incomprehensible muttered noises. Missouri moved his hand from Michigan's forehead and began running it through Michigan's hair.

"...st...e?" Michigan couldn't tell what Missouri was saying. Everything was too fuzzy and hot. Michigan whimpered, breathing heavily as the uncomfortableness mixed with the growing pain in his wing.

Michigan let out more incomprehensible noises, trying to convey that he was hot, and it hurt and burned, and he wanted to go away. Tears began to slide down Michigan's face.

It hurt so *badly*.

Darkness began creeping into his vision as his head spun, and his lightheadedness grew. Michigan shut his eyes and felt the heaviness in his limbs grow as well.

The pain was fading, the sounds were fading, everything was fading. Michigan welcomed the darkness, as it was pain-free, and didn't fight as it took him into unconsciousness.

Michigan groaned as consciousness and pain returned to him. He slowly opened his eyes, faintly noticing that his vision was less blurry than it had been. Looking around, he noticed he was in a church, most likely a makeshift hospital, if the pain in his wing and

foggy memories were anything to go by.

"Michi?" Michigan heard Missouri's familiar voice ask. He looked over to see his brother standing there, his face worried. And next to him, lying on a cot that had been pulled next to the one Michigan was lying on, was his wing, tightly bound in bandages, although smaller than Michigan remembered it being.

"'Llo 'Souri," Michigan said, his tongue finally managing to get out some of the first words he had spoken in...in...how long had he been unconscious? Before Michigan could ask that question, Missouri practically leaped on top of him, pulling him into a tight hug.

"Thank god you're awake! And talking! You've been half-conscious and barely speaking when you were, and I thought you had *died*! Mitch, I thought you were going to *die!*" Missouri said before he pulled away from the hug. He had small tears rolling down his face, which he quickly wiped away.

Michigan was a bit stunned by that declaration. His condition was so bad that Missouri thought he was going to die. He could have died? Well, at least Michigan could take comfort in the fact that it wasn't a country that caused the injury, so it's not like it would have been a permanent death.

"What happened? I...I remember getting shot..and falling towards the river, but what happened after that?" Michigan asked, pressing a hand to his forehead as he tried to pull himself into more of a sitting position. Missouri sighed and began rubbing his arm.

"When you started falling, I got two soldiers who could swim to get into the river with me to help me rescue you. We got to you and pulled you to shore. You...you were so cold I feared you were already dead. You were also bleeding badly. We got you to the hospital tent, and the doctors clipped your feathers so they could see the injury and...and had to amputate part of your wing. You've been pretty much out since then."

Michigan froze, and horror flooded through him.

"I...no...amputate?" Michigan asked, looking back at the bandaged wing and seeing now that part of it was gone.

"I'm sorry, Mitch," Missouri said, his voice thick with emotion, "I tried to get them to hold off on the decision, but...even if you had been able to keep it, it was...bad...shredded almost. But you're alive, and that's what matters!"

"But I'll never be able to fly again," Michigan said, closing his eyes and biting back tears.

"Yeah...you won't. Hopefully, Dad punishes Mississippi for this." Missouri said. Mississippi? What did Mississippi have to do with this? Sure, the siege was in her state, but that doesn't give her the blame. Missouri must have noticed Michigan's confused expression because he clarified what he meant.

"Mississippi was the one that shot you." He said. Michigan began to feel lightheaded again. Mississippi...she...he...he could have actually died! Mississippi shot me!

Mississippi took his wing from him.

"*Why*?" Michigan asked as Missouri put his hands on his shoulder. It's then Michigan realized he was shaking.

"I don't know. This war has done so much damage. Maybe she just doesn't care about her family anymore. I honestly have no clue as to what her motives were with shooting you." Missouri said, pulling Michigan into a quick hug. Michigan returned it the best he could, but his limbs were weak.

"At least I have you. Thank you for saving me." Michigan said. Missouri tightened the hug.

"You're welcome. But don't scare me like that again."

Puppet State

TW For Sexual Assault, Implied Sexual Assault, and just the Japanese Empire being shitty.

Also, the dialogue in this is in Japanese unless it's bold, which means it is English.

"Come on, Puppet. I have a special surprise to show you," Japan said as Philippines' body followed her. He had given up trying to fight it. He knew by now it was a fruitless endeavor. Philippines only tried anymore when he hated what Japan would make him do.

Even then, it was useless.

Japan walked to a door where Philippines could hear swearing. The voice was familiar, and horror began to grow in his gut.

Japan turned to Philippines and smirked, causing his anxiety to grow, "Let's have a family reunion. Go into the room, Puppet."

Family reunion? Did she mean...

His body entered the room, and his worst fears came to life. His daughter, Guam, was shackled to a wall. She was the one swearing, swearing at the two Japanese soldiers watching her. She had a black eye and many bruises and cuts.

She hadn't lost her fighting spirit.

Philippines thought it might have been better if she had. Guam looked over at the door, and her eyes widened as she saw him.

"Tatay!" She called, probably thinking he was being held prisoner like her. And Philippines was, and in a prison much stronger than hers. She could escape. Philippines was a puppet.

Philippines felt Japan's head lean towards his ear as she whispered words that sent chills down his spine, "Puppet, your little brat is

such a pain for me and my guards. You have four minutes to convince her to join willingly and call me a mother. If not, you will beat her until she is almost unconscious and tell her she has no choice but to join. After all, since you are my lovely puppet and partner, our daughter should join me."

NO! He screamed mentally, *Please, no! Please! I don't wanna, I don't wanna, I don't wanna, please! Please! Don't make me hurt my child! Don't make me!*

But his body just nodded and walked towards Guam.

"Tatay?" She asked again, sounding confused. She must have noticed something was wrong with him. Philippines' body kneeled, so his head was even with Guam's.

"Daughter, why are you making things so difficult for your mother?" His body asked in the language he was forced to speak. Guam looked confused.

"What? Are you speaking Japanese? I don't understand." She said. Philippines' body turned to face Japan.

"Japan, she does not know your language. How should I communicate with her?" His body asked.

"Well, that's a disappointment. Puppet, talk to her in a language she will understand and stress the importance of her learning my language. After all, it will soon be the only language you know, and I'm sure the little brat will want to talk to her remaining parent sometimes." Japan said.

Remaining parent? Was she planning on killing America?

Actually, Philippines didn't know why he was surprised by that. Of course, she was. Why wouldn't she? Philippines knew he didn't get along with America, but he didn't want America to die.

He couldn't let Guam lose her other father, not when she had already lost Philippines!

But his body nodded, and turned back to Guam before speaking to

her in English.

"**You need to learn Japanese. It is the lingua franca of the Pacific, and not knowing it will do you any good in the future.**" His mouth said. Philippines mentally cringed at how blank and emotionless his voice sounded.

"**Tatay? Are you okay**?" Guam asked. His body nodded.

"**I am perfectly fine and safe. Your mother is doing a wonderful job protecting me and ensuring the safety of the rest of Asia,**" his body said. Guam looked incredibly confused now.

"Tatay..." She said slowly, "**I don't have a mother. And your eyes are a different color**."

"**Of course, you have a mother. I have been blessed with the opportunity to become your mother's partner. Japan has treated me so well and wants to do the same for you, but you insist on fighting her. Why do you treat your mother this way?**" Philippines' body asked as his hand moved to Guam's cheek.

Guam looked shocked and horrified, as if she couldn't believe what his body was saying.

"**Tatay, what happened to you? I refuse to join Japan! She is not my mother! And you shouldn't be so willing either!**" Guam said, and Philippines wanted to cry.

I'm not doing this willingly, Guam. Please realize that. He thought, a desperate plea only he could hear.

"Well, that's unfortunate. Puppet, teach our daughter a lesson." Japan said. His body stood up, and nodded.

"How should the lesson proceed, Japan?" His body asked, switching back to Japanese.

"Violence. I would cut out the brat's tongue if she didn't make such a pretty little heir. She has been corrupted by America, but don't worry, I will fix that, just like I fixed you." Japan said, walking over to Philippines and moving his head to face hers before kissing him.

His body returned the kiss while, internally, Philippines tried to fight it.

He failed. Again.

"Tatay?" He heard Guam ask, fear and confusion in her voice.

Oh, my daughter, my strong, sweet daughter. I am so sorry for what I will be forced to do. Philippines said, wishing he could cry, apologize, or do any of the thousands of things he wanted to do.

"Good little Puppet. So nice and obedient. I can't wait to see Guam fall in line beside you. A perfect puppet daughter from a perfect puppet state." Japan purred into Philippines' ear as she pulled away from the kiss, before patting him on the cheek.

Philippines wished he could punch her in the face and claw her face until he was bloody and raw.

"Shall I proceed with the punishment now, Japan?" His body asked. Japan nodded, and Philippines' body turned to face Guam.

Please forgive me, daughter. I would never willingly do this. Please forgive me. Philippines begged.

"**Tatay, what are you doing?**" Guam asked as his body walked over to her. Philippines' body remained silent, and his face remained just as blank as it had been. It was probably unnerving. "Tatay?"

'I'm sorry, Guam.' He thought.

His body pulled back its fist and hit Guam in the face. She looked so stunned and horrified by that. And it didn't stop there. His body kept hitting her face and torso.

"Leave the face alone now, Puppet. I don't want to destroy her pretty little face too bad." Japan said. Philippines' body nodded and continued the assault until Japan told it to stop.

Japan then stalked forward, inspecting Guam's injuries. While she did that, Guam looked up at Philippines with pain-filled eyes.

"**Tatay...why?**" She asked. Japan laughed at that, enjoying their pain.

"**Because I told him too. And he just loves doing anything I ask of him, isn't that right, Puppet?**" Japan asked.

"**Yes, Japan**." His body replied monotonously. Guam's eyes widened.

"**You made Tatay a puppet state!**"

"**Ah, you noticed. Yes, I did. Your father has been one of my favorites with whom to play. The others are all new toys, but this one is old. I've enjoyed breaking this one so I can improve him.**" Japan said, bringing back horrible memories. Guam looked furious.

"**What did you do to him?**" She snarled. Japan smiled and laughed.

"**All I've done is play with my puppets. There's nothing wrong with that. My favorite part is how Philippines is aware of everything happening. It's so funny to see what he thinks. I can't wait until he breaks and realizes he was always meant to be a puppet. It's been so fun, breaking him**." Japan said, putting her hand on the side of Philippines' face, gently caressing it, as Philippines tried to pull away.

"**Yes, it is wrong! You've taken away Tatay's free wil**l." Guam said tears began streaming down her bloody and bruised face.

"**He doesn't need free will. He's a puppet. All he needs is me. Isn't that right?**"

"Ye**s, Japan. All I need is you.**" Philippines' body responded.

"**NO**! ÅHE'!" Guam screamed as she began breaking down into sobs, "Tata! **Tatay, please fight this! You can't...you can't let her do this.**"

Philippines had tried so hard to get free, but it was hopeless. Even for his daughter, he wouldn't be able to free himself. His body had become his prison.

"**Your words are useless, brat. I will ensure you learn manners and Japanese and become an excellent person like Puppet here,**" Japan said.

No. I don't want her to end up like me. Philippines thought, panic running through him.

Guam's eyes widened.

"**You would make me a puppet state?**" She asked, eyes flicking between Philippines and Japan.

Please don't. Please don't turn her into one. Philippines begged, even though he knew Japan would not hear him. Japan smirked and turned to leave the room.

"Come on Puppet. I think we are due for another...bonding experience." Japan said as she left the room. Philippines' body obediently followed as he listened to Guam's pleas for him to break out of Japan's control.

But he couldn't do anything.

He hadn't been able to for a long time.

Bonus Scene from Chapter 5 of Secrecy and Deception

"A British man talking about how the Declaration of Independence was important and great. I almost laughed, but was not able to hold back giggles. Dad also looked incredibly amused by that. Britain would probably be getting a call from Dad laughing about this."
-Missouri, Secrecy and Deception

"Okay, you guys can try to listen in, but you have to be quiet. You can't let Dad know you are listening," America said to the states, eager to hear him make fun of his dad.

"Sure thing, Dad," Massachusetts said. America raised an eyebrow.

"I mean it, Mass." He said. Massachusetts groaned.

"Do you not trust me to be quiet?" He asked.

"Do you want me to answer that?"

"No, not really. Just call Britain and make fun of him already."

America rolled his eyes and called Dad.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Dad! Remember how Winston Churchill was coming to my country to give a speech?"

"Yes, why?"

"So in his speech, he starts talking about important documents in the English-speaking world and how they proclaim freedom and the rights of man."

"Okay, does this have something to do with...uh...your independence?" His dad said hesitantly.

"Well, he did say Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights, the Habeas Corpus, trial by jury, and English common law find their most famous expression in the Declaration of Independence," America said. There was silence on the other end. "Dad, I never knew you thought so highly of the document I disowned you with."

"Seriously? Do you have to do this?"

"I mean, I know it's an absolutely amazing document, and my people and I love it, but you? I never knew you liked it."

"Winston Churchill doesn't speak my opinions."

"But he does think it's such an amazing and important document that really changed the English-speaking world."

"I'm never going to hear the end of this, am I?"

"Nope!"

"Good night, America," Dad said before he hung up. America snickered.

Massachusetts said, "If I ever meet him in person, that's going to be the first thing I mention."

"Please do it, he'll hate that."

Blinded

Warning, there are descriptions of blood in this. Written for ApeculiarChild2 , and based off her book Where The Mountain Meets The Sea, part 4 of the Paulet Affair, and my own headcanons.

"What did you say to her?" Britain asked as he marched towards Ireland.

"I told her the truth," Ireland stated plainly. Britain scowled, and he continued. "Are you that afraid of the truth, Bhreatain?"

"And now you're committing treason? You really don't appreciate England's mercy at all." Britain asked. Ireland swung his fist in an attempt to punch him, but Britain quickly pinned him against the wall, his size and strength giving him an advantage.

Ireland fought his grip.

"Speaking my language is not treason! Not to me! Not to anyone with an ounce of common sense! **You are a fool! For someone who didn't want to be like England, you've become an excellent copy!**" Ireland spat in his language. Britain sighed.

"The punishment for treason is usually death. But I, like England, am merciful towards you. You will not die. But you will still be punished severely." Britain said before slamming Ireland's head against the wall, stunning him.

Ireland groaned, and Britain began dragging him towards his prison, poorly disguised as a bedroom. Ireland tried to move his feet to slow Britain down, but Britain just slammed Ireland's head against the wall again. And again. And again. He didn't stop.

Ireland screamed, fighting to stay conscious, but Britain quickly shoved his cravat in Ireland's mouth, cutting it off. Britain dropped him to the ground, where Ireland laid, stunned, feeling blood begin

to pool around his head.

"MONTSERRAT!" Britain screamed. Panic flooded Ireland's body. What did Britain want with his son? Was this a part of the punishment that he was planning? Ireland tried to get up, but his body refused to obey, his limbs heavy.

Ireland's eyes began to flutter shut as he fought to keep them open. He heard footsteps approaching and then a voice, his son's voice.

"Dai-Father! Is he alright? Grandfather-" Montserrat said before being cut off.

"Stop pretending Ireland is your father. He has never been your father, and yet you stubbornly cling to him as one. He's manipulated you. You are a British colony and the son of my daughter, St Kitts." Britain said.

Ireland wished he could see Montserrat, but his good eye was on the same side as the wall, and most of the hallway was out of his sight.

"I'm sorry," Montserrat said, not sounding very sorry.

"*Grandfather*." Britain insisted as Ireland heard Montserrat let out a pained noise. He turned his head to the side, the action taking more effort than it should. Ireland saw Britain gripping Montserrat's arm tightly.

"I'm sorry, Grandfather." Montserrat said, wincing. Britain smiled.

"Good." He said before throwing Montserrat towards Ireland.

"I'm sorry, my son," Ireland muttered, gaining a swift kick in the head from Britain. Ireland groaned, black spots appearing in his vision as it became even harder to stay awake.

"Clean up the blood. And make sure Sandwich Islands doesn't see you," Britain said, although his voice sounded distant. He then looked down at Ireland. "I'll deal with you properly in a moment."

With that final comment, Britain put his foot down on Ireland's

face. He felt pain, and his nose broke under the pressure.

Then Ireland didn't feel anything anymore, the world being overtaken by a pain-free blackness.

Fabric. That was the first thing he felt. Fabric under his fingers. It felt like sheets. Was he on a bed? The next thing he felt was the pain. His head pulsed with pain, and his nose ached. Ireland could feel dried blood on his face and taste it on his lips. Then there was rope. Rope around his wrists and ankles.

Ireland opened his eyes and was met with darkness.

Ireland was in his room. How fun.

He groaned, slowly trying to sit up, although he couldn't get up that much, the ropes around his ankles stopping him. The movement made him realize that there was blood in his hair as the strands fell in front of his face. Ireland tried to brush it away, but his hands were tied tightly to the bed frame. Thankfully, the blood had dried, although it made him wonder how long he had been unconscious.

The only light he could see came from the door's cracks, mainly from the bottom. Ireland groaned again, and the pain seemed to increase.

"Ní féidir liom fanacht go mbeidh deis agam a shaol a ghlacadh." (I can't wait until I have an opportunity to take his life.) Ireland muttered, furious at the beating and at what Britain had forced his son to do.

Ireland heard the door open, and his head shot up. Light flooded the room. In the doorway stood Britain, a knife in one hand, a lantern in the other.

"Ireland." He said, placing the lantern on the desk. Britain then shut the door, and the lantern remained the only light source.

"Britain," Ireland responded, tone frosty. Britain walked over and pulled something out of his pocket, although the light was too dim

for me to see what it was.

"I do wish you weren't conscious yet, but I suppose if you are conscious, it'll help the punishment sink in better. Although that means I'll have to gag you, as Sandwich Islands is still here." Britain said. Ireland laughed.

"So concerned about her opinion? Do you not want to show her who you really are?" Ireland asked.

"Sandwich is valuable. I prefer that she respects me rather than fears me. She's easy to manipulate anyway, so making her afraid of me is more counterproductive," Britain said, his hands coming close to my face. Ireland tried to bite him, and he quickly pressed his hand against Ireland's nose.

Ireland's body went limp as the pain overwhelmed him. Ireland bit down a scream, not wanting to give Britain the satisfaction. Britain seemed annoyed by his closed mouth.

"The harder you make this, the more painful I will make it." He said, pressing his hand against Ireland's nose again. Ireland writhed in pain, trying to shake his hand off and breathing heavily as he forced down pained screams. "Come on, Ireland. *Scream*. We both know you want to."

With that last word, the pressure on Ireland's nose increased, and blinded by agonizing pain, he screamed. Britain quickly gagged Ireland, removing his hand from Ireland's nose, much to the man's relief.

"Now, that wasn't that hard, was it?" Britain said, walking back towards the desk before picking up the knife. "Remember the Nine Years' War?"

No. Please tell me he's not doing what I think he's doing. Ireland's thought, as his mind unwillingly brought him back to a field almost three hundred years early, where Ireland was pinned down by England, who nearly carved Ireland's eye out of his skull.

"Now, this may be permanent, or it may not be. I'm hoping for the

latter," Britain said, standing to the side of Ireland. Ireland closed his eyes, hoping that he could protect them. Britain grabbed his jaw, pushed Ireland's head down, and held it still. "Don't move."

Then, Britain pressed the blade of the knife into Ireland's eye. Ireland screamed, it being muffed by the gag. Unlike England, he didn't stab Ireland. He just cut across Ireland's eye, followed by another and another.

Until eventually, it stopped.

Blood was running down Ireland's face, and he tried to open his eyes but stopped and screamed as Britain's hand pressed down on the cuts.

"Don't betray me again," he hissed in Ireland's ear. Ireland then heard footsteps walk off and the sound of a door shutting.

Ireland tried to curl up into a ball, surprising himself by actually doing it, realizing Britain must have cut the ropes before he left. The door then opened again, and footsteps came towards him.

"It's Guernsey. Britain wants me to clean off the blood. Do you think you can stand?" Guernsey said as Ireland felt her hands untie the ropes and gag.

"Yes," Ireland said quietly as she helped him up, dizziness briefly overwhelming Ireland as he did. Ireland opened his eyes—well, at least he tried. His bad eye opened fine, but his good eye, the one Britain had attacked, he couldn't open. There was too much pain. "I can't see. My good eye is injured."

"Is it permanent?" Guernsey asked.

"I hope not," Ireland responded, letting Guernsey guide him out of the room. Ireland couldn't tell where they were headed, but the trip was quiet. They then stopped, and Ireland heard the sound of something being stuck into the water.

Then he felt a cloth touch his face, and he winced.

"Sorry, Ireland," Guernsey said as she began wiping the old and new

blood off Ireland's face. He then heard a gasp as Guernsey started wiping off the blood around his newly-injured eye.

"What? What is it?" Ireland asked.

"The... cuts Britain made are in the shape of the Union Jack," she said. Ireland immediately raised his hand to his eye, traced the cuts, and realized she was right.

"That *bastard!*" He hissed out, opening his good eye as the pain had lessened. But that did little to change what Ireland saw. He saw black and gray blurs that didn't even seem to be in the shape of anything.

"Ireland?" he heard Guernsey ask, her voice no longer in front of him.

"Yes?" Ireland said, turning, trying to figure out where she was.

"What are you doing?" She asked.

"Guerns, I can't see anything," Ireland said. Guernsey laughed bitterly.

"I figured. Britain made it clear that was what he wanted. Let me clean the blood out of your hair and get you a new shirt. Britain wants to see you afterward." Guernsey said as Ireland felt water on his head.

"I don't like this. I don't like not knowing what you are doing," Ireland said as Guernsey's hands tugged on his hair.

"Learn to deal with it," she responded coolly. Her hands left his hair, and Ireland stood awkwardly, wondering what she was doing now. Then he felt something touch his injured eye and winced.

"Bandaging it," Guernsey said, wrapping the bandages around his head and eye. "Now, take off your shirt. I have a new one to put on."

"What's wrong with my shirt?" Ireland asked as he took it off.

"It's covered in blood."

"Oh," Ireland responded, holding his hands out so Guernsey could give him the new shirt. He felt the fabric hit his hands and put it on as slowly as he could, not wanting to talk to Britain when he was so helpless.

"Guernsey! Are you finished?" Ireland heard Britain's demand.

"Yes, I'm done," Guernsey said before footsteps quickly walked away from where Ireland was, as slower steps came closer to him. Ireland felt someone grab his face, and he tried to pull away.

"If Sandwich asks, you are going to tell her that your eye is injured because of Cape Colony. You will tell Sandwich that Cape Colony attacked you. Understood?" Britain said, pressing hard enough on the bandages to cause pain.

"And if I tell her the truth?" Ireland asked. Britain pressed down harder.

"I will *make* sure you can never see again," Britain said. Ireland hesitated but nodded. He wasn't going to risk a chance at seeing again.

"Good. Now come with me." Britain said, grabbing Ireland's arm and pulling him along.

"Let go of me! Where are you going?" Ireland asked, trying to pull his hand off. He then felt himself getting slammed into the wall, and his breathing quickened as his fear grew. Ireland hated this, not being able to see.

"Well, what kind of country would I be if I didn't help my blind colony? You're going to be with me now. Until your sight returns, you will be with me every hour of the day." Britain said, and his hands left Ireland's shoulder. He scowled, wishing he knew precisely where Britain's smug face was so he could punch it.

"I *hate* you. You manipulative, power-hungry bastard. What makes you think I'll cooperate?" Ireland asked.

"Montserrat, you two care about each other quite a lot. If you don't cooperate, Montserrat will have the same fate as you," Britain said. Ireland froze, fear and fury filling his body as he heard those words.

"Will you leave Montserrat alone if I cooperate?" Ireland asked.

"Of course I will. I'm not one to go back on my word." Britain said. Ireland knew he was probably lying, but how could he not agree?

He would take it if he had even the slightest chance to protect his son from Britain.

Even if that meant sacrificing his autonomy in the process.

Americanized (Non-Canon)

Based on NewJerseySHlol's Headcanons for Oklahoma. These aren't mine, but I loved them so much I just had to write a oneshot for him on them. The headcanon is, in his words:

"Basically, Oklahoma was given to the Native tribes that were forced out of their homes in the trail of tears when he was a baby, and the tribes were told he was theirs to keep. While they were suffering substantially and certainly not happy, they tried to raise him the best they could, though it was a struggle. America infrequently checked on who he called 'Indian Territory', but eventually he started to become set on claiming his lands for himself. So naturally, America took Oklahoma away from them and basically re-raised him to be more American. Nowadays, Oklahoma is nearly unrecognizable to the tribes that'd raised him"

Also please check him out. He is amazing.

Summer, 1900

"I miss Oklahoma," Choctaw said as he walked with his fellow "civilized tribes" through Fort Gibson. They had agreed to meet here to discuss the dwindling contact from Oklahoma. They were worried and had just spoken for an hour, pouring over his letters to see if there was any cause for concern.

But they found nothing. And that was more worrying than something.

"So do I. I'm worried. What if America did something to him or banned him from talking to us? You've heard about what they have been doing in those schools. What if the same things are happening to our son?" Chickasaw said, worry clear on her face.

"America sees him as his son, even though he abandoned him," Cherokee said, as Creek patted her shoulder comfortingly, "and I

don't think he would do that."

"But like you said, he abandoned Oklahoma. What if he did?" Seminole pointed out.

"Seminole. ᏐᏩᏧ. You aren't helping anyone's worry." Cherokee said. Seminole groaned.

"Cherokee, we can't trust America! When has he ever given us a reason to? He forced us off our lands; he took our son to 'raise him properly.' I don't trust him with Okie's safety, and you shouldn't either." Seminole argued, making an excellent point that they probably all realized they were too nervous to voice.

"I know Sem-I-is that Okie?" Cherokee said, cutting off her statement and pointing further down the street. Choctaw looked to where she was pointing and nodded.

"That is him," Chickasaw said, relief in her voice.

"OKLAHOMA! Hę̄r's cē!" Creek yelled as they began rushing over. Choctaw saw Oklahoma's head briefly turn to face them before turning away again and continuing down the street.

"Oklahoma, wait!" Choctaw said as a wide grin began to spread across his face. He put his hand on Oklahoma's shoulder, and Oklahoma knocked it aside. Choctaw's face changed to one of shock and confusion.

"Okie?" Seminole asked. Oklahoma turned to face them, and the first thing Choctaw noticed was how blank his face was. Oklahoma kept it neutral and expressionless. His eyes seemed distant and conflicted before they settled on resolute determination.

"What do you want?" He asked, his voice empty. His accent had changed, too. It sounded like a perfect American accent. It sounded like America's.

Creek gave a small disbelieving laugh, "Okie, I know we haven't seen you in almost a decade, but you don't have to be so formal. We're your family, after all!"

"No, you aren't. I am not related to any Indians. My only family is Father and the other states." Oklahoma said in the same blank tone. Choctaw felt as if someone had stabbed a knife in his heart.

What had America done to him?

"ᎨᏍᏗ ᏱᎪᎵᏐᏍ." Cherokee said.

"I do not speak Indian," Oklahoma said, looking at Cherokee. The knife in Choctaw's heart twisted.

"That's Cherokee, not Indian. Okie, you know that language. Cherokee taught you," Choctaw said.

"I only know English and French. I don't know any Indian tongues." Oklahoma said. Choctaw felt sick. America had done something to their son. He warped him into a copy of himself, a copy of the same people who had put Oklahoma through so much strife.

"Yes, you do. We raised you with our languages, and we taught you them," Seminole pleaded. Oklahoma barely spared him a glance.

"You did not raise me. Father told me about how you kidnapped me to use against him and raised me to be an Indian so that I would fight against him. Luckily, Father was able to save me and helped me realize what you did. So stop calling me nicknames. Those are reserved for family only." Oklahoma said.

"But you are our son!" Choctaw insisted. Oklahoma's neutral expression broke and changed to one of fury.

"I am *not* the son of savages." He said. The knife buried itself deeper and deeper and kept twisting all the while.

He was so different now. What happened to Choctaw's Okie, the one who would sit on his knee and ask for stories? The one who barely spoke any English after living with them for so long. The one who showed so much emotion in everything he did.

"Iki, iki!" Choctaw remembers Oklahoma, who was seven years old, saying as he approached Choctaw once, long ago, his hands clasped tightly around something.

"What is it, iso nakni?" Choctaw had asked. Oklahoma had smiled, showing his missing front tooth, and proudly stuck his hands out.

"I caught a frog! Look at it, Iki!" He babbled, gasping as the frog jumped out of his dirty hands. Tears had welled up in his eyes.

"I'm sorry, Iki!" He had cried. "I lost the frog."

Choctaw had smiled warmly at him. "There will be other frogs. But if this one means so much to you, I will help you catch it again. How does that sound, Okie?"

Oklahoma said yes. Oklahoma was Choctaw's son and his *family*.

But Oklahoma...he...

"What did America do to you?" Cherokee asked angrily. The blank expression returned.

"He simply taught me who I was supposed to be," Oklahoma said.

"But this isn't who you are! What did America do to make you this way? Did he hurt you?" Chickasaw asked.

"Father helped me so much. I will forever be in his debt. He helped me become an American, who I am supposed to be. Now, I have no reasons to talk to a group of Indians outside of politics, so unless you have something of that nature to discuss, I'll be on my way." Oklahoma said. They were silent, the shock rendering them speechless.

Oklahoma nodded, turned around, and began walking back down the road.

He didn't even say goodbye.

Choctaw fell to his knees and began sobbing. America had stolen his son and turned him into a stranger. Choctaw shouldn't have let America take him. But he did. And now Oklahoma was gone.

His son was gone.

The Truth (Americanized Part 2, Non Canon)

Part 2 of that oneshot I wrote for NewJerseySHlol. Keep in mind that Oklahoma has been brainwashed and manipulated by America since 1890ish in Kai's headcanons for this, and the fact that this is not my headcanon.

Fall, 1970

"Okie!" Oklahoma heard his father call. His head shot up from where it had been resting on the table, and he quickly rushed towards his father's voice.

"Yes? Do you need me?" He asked, coming up to where his father was. His father nodded and sighed.

"I need to tell you something, Oklahoma. Something that I definitely should have told you a while ago." Father said.

"What is it?" Oklahoma asked, curious.

"Oklahoma..." Father began, before hesitating slightly, "Oklahoma, the five civilized tribes didn't kidnap you."

"What?" Oklahoma gasped out, nearly falling over in shock.

"I gave you to them to raise," His father said. No, that...that couldn't be true.

Could it?

"*Why*?" Oklahoma asked in a strangled voice. His father loved him. Why would he have abandoned Oklahoma with the Indians?

"Because you were Indian Territory. But when Oklahoma Territory was created, I knew you would become a state someday. So I forced them to give you back." Father said. Oklahoma nodded. His father

has talked about this many times before.

"You saved me from them," Oklahoma said. Father sighed and shook his head.

"I stole you from them. They were your family." He said. Now, Oklahoma was the one shaking his head.

"No. You saved me from them. You are my family! Not them!" Oklahoma insisted. Why was his father saying all these weird lies right now? He knew the truth, and he had taught Oklahoma it.

"That was a lie. I never saved you. I said that to manipulate you. Oklahoma, I'm sorry." His father said.

Oklahoma's breathing was quick and panicked. He turned and bolted out of the room. Upon entering his room, he slammed the door shut and locked it.

"He's lying, he's lying, he's lying, *he's lying*. I'm American. Father saved me from the natives. I'm an American," Oklahoma said, trying to convince himself that his father's statement wasn't true. He had to be lying. He just had to be.

All that had happened since 1890 couldn't be a lie.

Oklahoma felt like he was falling, like he was drowning. Everything was too much. Those few words, that revelation, had ripped away Oklahoma's safe world, his life.

Father had manipulated me, according to him at least. Oklahoma didn't feel like he had been manipulated.

Maybe this was part of a bad joke. Maybe Oklahoma had done something wrong. Had he acted unAmerican? Had he acted too much like an Indian? Did he make them not trust him anymore?

"I'm American, I'm American, I'm American," Oklahoma muttered desperately.

Oklahoma was American. He wasn't an Indian. Why did his father say those things? Oklahoma must have done something wrong.

Oklahoma needed to do better. He needed to be better. He needed to make sure his father knew that Oklahoma was an American, through and through, regardless of the manipulation Oklahoma suffered at the hands of the Indians and regardless of the lie his father had just told.

Maybe that was why he told Oklahoma. Perhaps this was a test!

That had to be it! This was a test by his father so Oklahoma could prove to his father that he was no longer corrupted by the Indians who kidnapped him. Oklahoma smiled.

Oklahoma was going to pass this test.

He was an American. Not an Indian.

Anyone who said otherwise had to be wrong.

Languages

Requested by XxWingsBluexX

"Just so you are aware, America is incredibly sleep-deprived," Ireland said, entering the room.

"He always is. Why do you feel the need to announce it?" Guyana asked.

"Because he is too tired to focus on speaking English, which led to a very confusing phone call this morning, the point is, ignore him until he gets more sleep and we can all understand him," Ireland said. UN groaned. Of course something came up with America. Why wouldn't something come up with America on a day when they needed him to be here and talking in a language we all knew?

"Aloha kakahiaka," America said, walking in after Ireland, a cup of what UN hoped was coffee in his hand. He had large eye bags under his eyes and was swaying slightly.

"According to his kids, he hadn't slept in twelve days," Ireland added on, watching America in concern.

"Tsy dia zava-dehibe loatra ny torimaso. Ati pe Mo ṣeto igbasilẹ agbaye tuntun!" America said. UN groaned. This was going to be annoying.

"Ireland, we'll reschedule this meeting for a later date. Please get America into bed so he can focus on English," UN said. Ireland nodded, and America blinked sluggishly.

"កុំកំណត់ពេលប្រជុំឡើងវិញ។" he said. UN sighed.

"America, none of us-well most of us don't understand what you are saying. Please go to sleep, and we can do this tomorrow." UN said. America turned to Ireland.

"Apa, kérlek, ne csatlakozz ehhez!" He said. Ireland grabbed his

shoulders, looking America in the eyes.

"I have no fucking clue what you just said. Now go to bed." Ireland said. Germany began laughing, and a few other countries joined him. UN sighed. This was incredibly annoying. At least most of the other countries who lacked an official language weren't insomniacs, so hopefully this doesn't become a common occurrence.

"Sajjeb," America said after a few moments. "Mwen pral dòmi."

America then turned to leave the room, and Ireland followed.

"I'll make sure he sleeps. Have a great day, everyone." Ireland called, guiding America out the door as America had started leaning on him for support.

"Anyone who lacks an official language is no longer allowed to be that sleep-deprived," UN said before going to leave. Nothing was going to get done today.

The Nightmare

Thanks to NewLostIslands for help on writing some of Finland, and for getting me obsessed with Uhtua. Expect lots of Uhtua related things in the future. Also, don't worry, I'm working on the requests.

Finland was standing in a forest. He looked around and saw snow-covered trees in every direction but no other signs of life. He began walking off in a direction, hoping to find any way back to civilization, as he was not prepared for spending a long time in the middle of the winter wilderness.

Suddenly, Finland felt something jump on top of him, and he was knocked to the ground, his head buried in the snow. Finland quickly began trying to pull himself out of the snow, hearing laughter as he did so.

"I got you, Isä!" Finland heard Uhtua's voice call. Finland laughed.

"You did get me," Finland said as he faced Uhtua, whose smile was wide and bright. His sister, North Ingria, and his brother, Åland, laughed.

"We should start shoving you into the snow more often. It's hilarious." Åland said in Swedish. Finland sighed.

"You live to annoy me, don't you, Åland?" Finland asked. Åland nodded, and Finland sighed.

"It's fun to gang up on you, old man!" North Ingria said.

"I'm not that old!" Finland insisted.

"Yes, you are," my sons coursed. Finland blinked, caught off guard by the Finnish and Swedish spoken together, before sighing. He loved his kids just as much as they loved being a handful.

"Don't worry, Isä. We love you even though you're old and

decrepit," North Ingria said. Finland smiled, hugging North Ingria closer as he heard Uhtua protest and ask if he could be hugged.

But then North Ingria vanished from his arms. Finland's head shot up, and he looked around. The forest had vanished, and everything was black. Finland was surrounded by black, and his children were missing.

"Uhtua? North Ingria? Åland?" Finland called out their names, running frantically through the blackness and looking for signs that they were there.

"Why did you abandon me, Isä?" Finland heard North Ingria's voice say from behind him. He turned and saw her standing there, covered in blood, which was steadily weeping from wounds covering her body. "Why did you do this to me, Isä?"

"I...I..." Before Finland could say anything, he heard Uhtua's voice behind him.

"Why didn't you protect me?" He said. Finland turned to face him and saw Uhtua standing there, looking unharmed but wearing a Soviet military uniform with a gun pointed at Finland's head.

"Uhtua-" Finland began before being cut off.

"*Why didn't you help me?*" Uhtua demanded, his voice warping and increasing in volume as his form warped and changed until the Republic of Karelia stood in front of me—the country Uhtua now represented.

"You turned me into this. You let me live for years under their rule. You deserve to die, Finland, to pay for what you have done!" Uhtua said in Russian. Finland tried to back up, to flee, but he felt his arm get pinned behind his back as the scent of blood filled his nose.

"You aren't going anywhere, Isä." North Ingria hissed into his ear. Finland saw Åland in the background and began to call out to him as Uhtua put the gun on his forehead.

"Åland! Åland help me please!" Finland yelled. Åland turned to face Finland, his face blank.

"You never showed any care towards me. So why should I care about you?" He said right before the gun fired.

Finland's eyes flew open as he woke up. Then, he immediately turned over and threw up all over the floor. Finland was shaking and sweating, his face coated with tears. Finland was sobbing loudly, and he covered his mouth in an attempt to make his sobs quieter.

Finland couldn't let Åland hear him.

He tried to get out of bed to clean up his vomit, but Finland collapsed to the ground as soon as he stood. Finland was still sobbing, the smell of vomit stinging his nose.

The guilt made him sick as the words of Uhtua and North Ingria echoed through his mind. Both of them were right. Finland had failed to protect them, to help them.

Finland couldn't make it up to North Ingria. He never would be able to.

But Uhtua.....

Finland could still help him. Finland just had to help him remember. Finland had to help him because he couldn't before. Finland couldn't just leave him behind—not again. Finland had to help him. Finland failed to help once. He failed, and Uhtua was hurt, and Finland needed to help him to make up for that.

Maybe that would prevent the guilt from haunting his dreams.

Finland had failed to help him once. Finland didn't want to do it again.

Dog Therapy (non-canon)

For NewLostIslands . I hope you enjoy this.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Alaska asked Karelia as they sat on the rug in front of the fireplace, Alaska's dogs settling down in different spots across the room.

"About what?"

"Who my brother wants you to be. I know you are uncomfortable with it. I can see it in your eyes." Alaska said. Karelia looked away, rubbing his arm.

"I'm not-"

"Karelia," Alaska said gently. Karelia sighed.

"Why don't you call me Uhtua?" He asked. Alaska shrugged.

"You are not Uhtua. I will not call you a name that is not yours," he stated plainly, coaxing Anastasiya, one of his dogs, to come to him.

"But I was Uhtua." Karelia insisted, looking upset at Alaska's answer.

"Was. Not are. My brother is stuck in the past due to his guilt. He wants to see you as Uhtua because it makes him feel like he didn't fail to protect you. He wants to have the son he lost because he feels that underneath, all of what Russia did to you is the same person he lost. He is wrong." Alaska explained bluntly. Karelia flinched at the last sentence.

"So I failed him," Karelia said. Alaska shook his head.

"You did not. You do not dictate Finland's feelings and emotions. You do not control how he feels." Alaska said.

"I..." Karelia said, trailing off as words failed him.

"I have a question for you," Alaska said, wanting to move the topic away from something causing his nephew so much misplaced guilt.

"What is it?"

"How do you feel about Uhtua?" Alaska asked. Karelia paused.

"I don't know. I...it's hard to explain. It's like...he's...I'm...I...I don't know. I guess, in a way, I'm mourning Uhtua. But I shouldn't...I am Uhtua...or at least I was. So he's not dead. So I can't do that." Karelia said quietly.

"Uhtua is dead Karelia. And you are allowed to mourn that. You are allowed to mourn the loss of who you once were, okay?" Alaska said. Karelia nodded, teary.

"I just feel bad that Uhtua is dead. I...want to be Uhtua again...but I can't, and I don't know...I feel bad that I can't help Suomi. I just...I feel bad and guilty, and I don't really understand why and..." Karelia trailed off, unable to find a way to express his feelings. Cungagnaq, the biggest of Alaska's dogs, stuck his head in Karelia's lap. Karelia's tears welled up even more as Karelia began to scratch his head.

"That is okay. You need time to heal and grieve. Do not feel guilty for that. That is natural." Alaska assured him, placing a hand on his shoulder. Karelia nodded and began crying. Taisiya, another dog, walked over and sat down next to Karelia, trying to comfort him too.

Karelia began crying harder, and Alaska slowly pulled him into a hug, wrapping his wings around his nephew as Taisiya, Cungaganaq, and Anastasiya joined the hug, their bodies wrapped around the two states. Karelia's body shook with his sobs, and Alaska teared up as well, reminded so much of himself.

Karelia reminded Alaska of himself when he became an American state and was introduced to a non-toxic environment. Confused. Lost. Scared. Hurt. Alaska pulled his nephew closer, as he began to cry as well. Alaska was so furious with the world, so enraged at it for hurting all of the good people in his biological family until they

broke or died.

The world broke him, broke Karelia, killed North Ingria, and was chipping away at the rest of his family. And they were expected just to sit down and take it because they were countries. No one would be arrested. No one could remove Karelia from the household, and that destroyed his sense of self. Alaska got out because his abuser gave him away, and even then, in a safe environment, it took him years to heal.

Nothing could be done to get Karelia to a safe environment to heal unless he wanted to leave.

And who knew if he would? Alaska remembered how strong his brainwashing had been. He didn't willingly get to a safe environment. He hated leaving his abuser. That was a horrible, unimaginable thought to him. Would his nephew be the same way? Alaska didn't know. Karelia certainly seemed more aware of the abuse now, but he didn't like either side.

That's why he came to Alaska in the first place. Neutrality. A place to sort out his thoughts. A place that wouldn't try to force him to side with anyone. A place that would just help him think.

But Alaska did have to tell him something.

"Karelia," Alaska said, pulling away but still allowing Karelia to take comfort from him as Cungaganaq returned his head to Karelia's lap.

"Yes?" Karelia asked, some fear in his voice as his hands moved to sink into Cungaganaq's fur.

"I know I promised I would not take any sides, but I want to give advice I learned while healing from my abuse. Do you want to hear it?" Alaska asked, knowing that as much as he wanted Karelia to hear his advice, giving him a choice in the matter was probably the most important thing he could do.

"I...okay," Karelia said.

"Take time for yourself. Do not feel like you have to pick a side immediately. Get away. Think." Alaska said. Karelia nodded.

"That...I will take that into consideration." Karelia said. Alaska nodded.

"Good." Alaska said, watching Karelia and Cungaganaq with a smile. Maybe Alaska should think about getting Karelia his own dogs. Karelia would probably like that.

Concerned Family

Written for ApeculiarChild2 becasue we were talking about this on discord. Just a little snippet.

"I remember the last time someone tried to make food for everyone. It was my uncle, British Raj. Grandfather didn't like it, and Uncle Canada had told him about it. Anyone who was there in the kitchen got locked in their rooms for a week, and we weren't allowed food until we were out." New Zealand said, smiling slightly as he thought back to that story.

Uncle Canada was such a snitch, and it was so annoying. He wouldn't let them get away with anything. The amount of fights his uncles nearly had because of that is insane.

New Zealand looked up from his plate, where he had been sliding his food around with a fork, and saw his family staring at him, their faces showing clear horror.

"What?" New Zealand asked, confused as to why they were staring at him like that and uncomfortable with the attention. "Why are you staring at me?"

"I...we knew Britain abused you, but we didn't realize it was that bad," Tonga said. New Zealand furrowed his eyebrows in confusion.

"What are you talking about? My Grandfather never abused me. He loved me." New Zealand said. The horror on Tonga's and everybody else's faces grew, aside from Hawaii and American Samoa. They both had knowing looks on their faces.

"Aotearoa...that...then what do you call that? Being locked in your room without food?" Easter Island asked. New Zealand shrugged.

"It's just Grandfather disciplining us. He's had to do worse to get us to behave before, but that punishment was light," New Zealand said, trying to alleviate their worries.

"That's a light punishment?" Koro asked, his voice sounding horrified and strained.

"Yeah? Because I wasn't abused. Montserrat was abused; he got beat up by Grandfather a lot because he would try to protect Uncle Ireland from being beaten up." New Zealand said, still confused about why everyone acted so weird. He felt awkward now, and he looked back down at his food.

Then, New Zealand felt arms wrap around him. It was his other grandfather. He could feel tears running down Māori's face and onto his shoulder.

"Koro, why are you crying?" New Zealand asked, still confused.

"He is just worried, Aotearoa. That kind of childhood is not normal." Hawaii explained.

"Oh." New Zealand said dumbly in response before awkwardly patting his Koro on the back, "Don't worry, Koro. I wasn't abused."

That just made him cry harder, so New Zealand put his food down so his Koro could better embrace him. Koro quickly did so, and New Zealand leaned into the embrace, hoping to help calm him. More of New Zealand's family joined the hug, starting with Hawaii and Samoa.

New Zealand closed his eyes and sunk into their grip, smiling as he heard American Samoa let out a bird noise.

New Zealand felt Koro run his hands through his hair as he kept apologizing in Māori. New Zealand was confused as to why he was apologizing. Nothing terrible happened to him when he lived with Grandfather. New Zealand was a favorite. He was well-loved by his Grandfather, just like he was well-loved by his Polynesian relatives.

New Zealand pushed the confusion out of his mind, satisfied to rest in his Koro's, his family's, grip. Slowly, he began to grow more and more limp as the warmth of his family slowly sent him off to sleep.

Maybe Hawaii can help him convince them he wasn't abused.

With that thought, New Zealand let himself sleep.

Arson

California commits arson, requested by HannahRiverlight

"Cali's been running around with gasoline and matches all day. Do you think we should be worried?" Nevada asked Arizona as they watched California walk by with said objects.

"Probably," Arizona answered.

"Relax you two. You aren't my target." California called. Nevada laughed at that.

"You have a target?" Arizona asked. California nodded.

"That hijo de puta Texas. His house is going to go up in flames!" California said with a laugh. Nevada laughed harder at that as Arizona just stared at California in concern.

"I want to ask what motivated this so badly, but I am also very afraid of the answer," Arizona eventually said.

"Good choice, Sunny. Good choice. Vada, want to help me? I know you are always down for illegal things," California asked.

"Not all the time, but this seems fun. So long as we don't get arrested. But I have four active warrants out for human me, so this should be fine." Nevada said, shrugging.

"You have *four* warrants out for you? Jesus fuck Vada, what did you do?" Arizona asked, looking like she was questioning both Nevada's sanity and California's.

"Relax. Two are for car theft, one is for battery, and the other is for missing my court date," Nevada said, omitting the fact that all of this had been gained through helping Illinois work to get out of the unfortunate situation he had been trapped in since 1921.

"YOU MISSED A COURT DATE?" Arizona yelled. Nevada laughed,

knowing it was best to hide his feelings about Illinois's situation. After all, Illinois couldn't tell anyone and the consequences would be deadly.

"Jeez, Valentine, would you speak a little louder? I don't think they heard you in DC," Nevada said. Arizona rolled her eyes.

"Yeah, please stop screaming while we plan illegal things," California said. Arizona groaned and threw her hands into the air.

"You two are infuriating!" She said before marching out.

"Well, she's a joy to be around. Anyway, are you ready to set Texas's house on fire?" California said, holding up a match and smiling.

"Ready! Let's just hope he doesn't find out about it being us. I'm more scared of what he'll do than what the police will do." Nevada said.

"Well, this is revenge for him burning down my house, so I'm sure he won't mind."

"TEXAS BURNT DOWN YOUR HOUSE?"

Human Perceptions

Please take note that New Jersey's human name is Aaron Nicholas Washington, which is what he will be referred to as. Inspired by NewLostIslands .

"Hey guys, have you ever thought about what the countryhumans are like?" New Jersey's human friend Stacy asked their friend group. New Jersey choked on the water he was drinking, caught off guard by the question.

"Sorry. Went down the wrong pipe." He said through the coughing.

"I hate when that happens." Ace said, "As for your question Stace, I think they are probably all stuck-up assholes."

Texas definitely is. New Jersey thought to himself before speaking up, "Don't you think that's a little harsh? I mean, you've seen the news. They show more emotion than stuck-up assholeness on it."

"Aaron has a point. Have you seen that news clip from California when they were told that the group or whoever it was had a really good idea of who the Zodiac Killer was? The one from last year? She started crying," Ryan said. New Jersey nodded.

"My point exactly." He said.

"Are you sure? I mean, countryhumans are just the governments. She was probably only crying because there was some convoluted political reason involved, not because they can actually feel emotions," Ace argued. New Jersey was furious at that. Of all the misconceptions about him and his family, the idea that they were their governments was the worst one.

"Countryhumans literally have the word human in their name. Don't you think that at least makes them a little like us?" New Jersey pointed out.

"Also, countryhumans are definitely not like their government. Florida is gay and crossdresses, and his government hates the LGBTQ community." Ryan pointed out, becoming New Jersey's favorite human friend.

"They are probably only called human because they are humanoid. And how can a landmass be gay?" Stacy reasoned.

"Human-HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A PICTURE OF WALES? Or Finland? Or Oregon? Or Michigan? Those four definitely don't look very humanoid. The human in their name cannot be there for that reason. It doesn't make any sense." New Jersey said, wanting to start ranting about how they could feel emotions, something even he knew despite his emotional processing issues.

But giving himself away as New Jersey was not a good idea.

"So they don't look human. This is more proof that they aren't human and, therefore, can't feel emotions; they are just government tools. I mean, if Florida is actually gay, then why the hell hasn't he stopped anti-LGBTQ legislation? It's bullshit!" Ace said.

Trust me, Ace, if he could get rid of that legislation, he would. New Jersey thought to himself.

"You don't think he isn't trying to? He's not in charge of making or passing the bills. That's the job of the elected people in the state government. That's like saying it's Ryan's fault the New Jerseyan government passed a bill. It's not. He doesn't control that." New Jersey argued.

"Yeah, but Ryan's human, not the State of New Jersey!" Stacy exclaimed. New Jersey almost laughed at that.

No, I'm the State of New Jersey, he thought, trying to keep a smile from his face. Unfortunately, he failed, as Ryan and Ace both noticed his smile.

"Why are you smiling?" Ace asked.

"I find the thought of Ryan being New Jersey amusing, considering he was born in Ireland," New Jersey said.

"Maybe I'm Ireland then. Have you ever thought of that?" Ryan joked.

"Nah, Ireland is probably way cooler than you could ever be." New Jersey said, knowing full well that Ireland was way cooler than him.

"Thanks, Aaron. I'm glad to know I have such amazing friends," Ryan said. New Jersey rolled his eyes.

"You were the one who decided to befriend me. You signed up for this!" He responded.

"Aaron's right, you did decide to befriend us," Stacy said.

"And I'm sensing I made a big mistake with that."

Fuck Tourists

Happy Birthday, Aingeal Álainn, aka ApeculiarChild2 . Please go read her books. This is something I highly enjoyed writing for her. (Also, I really hope I got things right)

"Hello?" America said as he answered his phone.

"Hello. I'm Alex from the Hawaii Police Department. I really hope I'm calling the right person for this. Anyways, uh...oh, this is so weird. Um, we have the State of Hawaii in custody. She beat up a tourist from California. She claims that the tourist started the fight, but the tourist's family claims they did nothing wrong, and Hawaii decided to attack them for being whi-"

"Imma cut you off there, Alex. First off, Wai doesn't fight people for no reason. If a fight happened, she wasn't the one who started it. Second off, 'attacking them for being white'? That's bullshit, and I think you know it. Thirdly, can you put Hawaii on the line? I need to talk with her." America said.

"Ye-yes, sir," Alex said. There was some movement before Hawaii's voice came over the line.

"Hello, Lika."

"Hey Wai. You have the shittiest fucking tourists ever, holy shit." America said.

"Yeah, I've noticed."

"Can't believe they arrested you. The police officer, Alex, who called me, sounded like he couldn't believe it either." America said.

"Well, when you beat up a racist haole tourist in front of more racist haole tourists, you tend to get arrested, even if you are the state," Hawaii asked. America could see her shrugging as she said that sentence, and he could tell she was smiling that bitter smile.

"I'll pay you bail and help you get out of this. I'm very proud that you have done this." He said. America heard Hawaii sigh in what he assumed was a relief.

"Mahalo Amelika." She said.

"No problem," America said as he walked to his computer and began to research how to make custom T-shirts.

"What's your shirt size?" He asked as he pulled open the website.

"Women's medium, why?"

"I'm making you a T-shirt that says 'Fuck Tourists' on it. Consider it a souvenir of your adventures today." America answered. Hawaii begins laughing her head off.

"They are making me give the phone and return it for the shirt. I am going to enjoy wearing it." Hawaii said. America then heard the phone switch hands before Alex's voice came on again.

"I thought you were going to lecture her?" He asked.

"I said I needed to talk to her. And by talking to her, I mean telling her how proud I am of her." America said.

"She beat up a tourist!"

"She beat up a racist asshole, the kind of person I really wished didn't live in my country. Now, I'll be over there in about five minutes, so then I can lecture those tourists to their faces. Good day, Alex." America said before hanging up.

He then proceeded to work more on creating that T-shirt for Hawaii. She needed it. And it would go with her coffee mug!

Delusions and Poison

Written as a little gift for SinfullTrashHuman and NewLostIslands , as both of them have given me brain rot about these two. Russia is very delusional and that's somehow really easy to write.

Karelian hated Russia. It was Finland's fault. Just when Russia thought he was making progress on unbrainwashing his beloved son, this had to happen.

It was a minor inconvenience, though. Russia had a way to fix this.

"Give him it!" Russia barked at the soldier who was holding the small cup. The soldier nodded and walked over to where a guard was restraining Russia's son. The guard holding Karelian forced his mouth open, and the other guard fed Russia's son the poison.

"Now leave," Russia commanded them. They nodded and left, the guard restraining Karelian and passing him to Russia. Karelian then attempted to kick him in the shin.

"Let me go!" He yelled. Russia pushed Karelian against the wall.

"Shush now. You'll feel better soon." Russia told his son. Karelian's struggles slowly weakened, and once his knees gave out, Russia let him slide to the floor before crouching down and smiling at him.

Russia stroked his son's cheek as Karelian's eyes slowly drifted shut. Russia smiled, knowing that once he woke up, Karelian wouldn't be mad at him anymore and could continue working to save him from Finland's manipulation.

"It's alright, Karelian. Just sleep. I'll be here when you wake up." Russia whispered, pulling his dying body close. Karelian tried to pull away.

"Ei." He muttered quietly. "Ei. Ei. Ei."

Russia scowled, annoyed at the lack of Russian leaving his son's mouth, before running his hand through Karelian's hair. Hopefully, that would help calm him and help him realize he was making a mistake.

"Now, Karelian, I can't speak that language. You need to talk in Russian if you want me to understand you," Russia said. Karelian shook his head, and his fighting stopped. His body became limp.

He was almost dead.

"Sleep, my son. Everything will be okay when you wake up," Russia said. Karelian's head dipped forward, and Russia checked his pulse, feeling nothing.

He was dead.

Russia picked Karelian up and began walking him toward his room, knowing his son would be confused when he woke up. Karelian hated getting sick like this, but it was necessary, especially since he wanted to believe Finland over Russia, his true father.

Russia would test him with the girl, but he'll have to postpone that until he's sure Karelian won't believe Finland's lies anymore. It was so helpful to erase his memory like this.

It was a shame Russia couldn't erase his memories of Finland. That would help Karelian so much if he were free from the manipulation and the brainwashing. Then Karelian would remember that Russia was his father, and he was Russia's son.

Russia felt his hatred for Finland grow. How dare Finland steal his son and force Russia to poison and kill him again and again and again. Russia would also have to imprison the soldier who poisoned his son as well.

Russia would make Finland pay for this, one way or another. Russia would make all those who hurt Karelian pay. Finland claimed he cared about Russia's son, and yet he killed him so many times through the poison. Finland was awful, a monster.

Russia would avenge his son.

Russia opened the door to Karelian's room and placed him on the bed, taking extra care to tuck him in so he would be comfortable when he woke up. Russia then checked to ensure the window bars were still tight. This was another reason Russia hated Finland. He had made Russia lock up his beautiful son like a criminal, and Russia hated Finland for that. He would pay.

Russia then examined the rest of the room to ensure that Karelian wasn't trying to find another way out. Satisfied that he wasn't, he turned back to Karelian's body. He looked so peaceful as if he were sleeping. Russia smiled, walked over, and began running his hand through Karelian's hair again.

Russia couldn't wait for him to wake up.

Then Karelian would be back to loving Russia.

Fear

"No!" Michigan heard Illinois call from the other side of the room. His head shot up in concern, and he went to see what was happening. Michigan looked into Illinois' side of the room to see him tangled in his bedsheets, thrashing on the bed, and letting small whimpers escape his lips.

Another nightmare. He's been having too many of them lately.

Michigan walked over to him and went to shake his shoulder, ready to wake him up. Illinois thrashed again, wings curling around him as more mumbled words escaped him.

"Please don't," Illinois begged, tears welling in his eyes. Michigan quickly woke him up, not wanting his little brother to be trapped in any nightmare.

"Noi! Noi! Baby Bird, please wake up!" Michigan said, shaking him. Illinois whimpered again, moving his hands to cover his ears, "Noi?"

Illinois opened his eyes and jolted backward, pressing himself against the bedframe. His eyes were wide, and he was afraid as if he didn't know where he was. Then, the fear faded, and the tension began to bleed out of his body.

"So-sorry." He said, looking away. Illinois was acting too much like Delaware did after the Occupation of Wilmington. That scared Michigan badly.

"It's okay; you didn't bother me. Are you okay? Do you want a hug, Baby Bird?" Michigan asked. Illinois wiped some tears off his face.

"No, no, I'm alright," he said. Michigan nodded, not wanting to push him on that, even though Michigan really wanted to hug his little brother.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Michigan asked.

Illinois was silent before he said in a quiet voice, "Please don't die."

Why would he say that? Unless....

"Baby Bird, did you dream about me dying?" Michigan asked gently. Illinois nodded, a fresh wave of tears appearing.

"You, Papa, everyone! Everyone died, and it was my fault! It was all my fault! I'm such a bad person. I—" Michigan cut him off by pulling him into a tight hug, wrapping his wings around him.

"Baby Bird, I promise I won't die. And you aren't a bad person. You are an amazing little brother. I love you so much." Michigan said. Illinois began crying louder.

"It's my fault! I'm putt-You have almost died twice, Michigan! How can you promise that you'll be fine? What if you are put in danger by me?" Illinois said.

"Okay, first, neither of those times was my fault, and second, you would not put me in danger on purpose. If we are both in a dangerous situation, I'll protect you. I'm your big brother, Baby Bird. I'll always protect and help you, even if you got me into the situation," Michigan said. Illinois squeezed him tight.

"Thank....thanks. That means a lot. I'm..." Illinois trailed off, pulling away, worry clear on his face.

"Noi?" Michigan asked, concerned.

"Will you always protect me?" he asked in a small voice. Michigan nodded, and Illinois pulled him into a hug again, "Thank you."

"You're welcome, Baby Bird," Michigan said. Illinois groaned.

"Please stop calling me that." He said.

"No, can do, Baby Bird." Michigan shot back with a smile.

"Maybe I don't want your protection," Illinois said, crossing his arms.

"Sure you do, Baby Bird," Michigan said, and Illinois gently punched him in the shoulder.

"I hate you, Michigan."

"I love you too, Illinois." Michigan said, before shooting another glance at his brother, who was staring intently at the smoke alarm, some unreliable emotion in his eyes, "Are you okay? They've been getting a lot worse. Don't think I haven't noticed."

Illinois looked back at Michigan with an emotion that looked like guilt in his eyes. Illinois then looked away as if he could bear to keep making eye contact with Michigan.

"I'm fine. They just get worse sometimes, that's all." Illinois said. Michigan knew Illinois was either lying or not saying everything. He had known his brother too long to be fooled by the old "I'm fine" act.

"Are you sure? I'm here for you if you need to talk." Michigan offered. Illinois smiled, a welcomed thing before it quickly faded.

"I appreciate the offer, Mitch, but it's alright," Illinois said. Michigan still wanted to pry, to get the full story out of his brother, but he knew Illinois was clamming up and wasn't going to answer any more questions, especially if Michigan kept pushing.

"Alright Noi. Try and go back to bed. I know it's hard, but you can't spend all night talking to your turtle." Michigan said. Illinois flipped him off but nodded.

"I'll try," he said as Michigan left the room. Still worried, Michigan didn't go back to bed but stood next to the door, listening.

"I'm going to say something wrong in my sleep eventually," Illinois muttered, "Why do I have to have all these stupid dreams about shit that's over and shit that's not even traumatizing? Why is every aspect of my life haunting me in my sleep? I hate it, Ollie! I hate it so much."

Silence fell again, and Michigan heard Illinois get back into his bed. Michigan backed away from the door, his mind racing, and headed

back to his bed.

Ollie must be the name of Illinois' turtle, so that was one mystery down.

But everything else? That was concerning and worried Michigan more than the nightmares did. He just wished Illinois would talk to him like he used to when they were younger like Michigan used to when he was struggling with his addiction.

But ever since Prohibition, Illinois had become increasingly closed off and distant, which scared Michigan. Everyone, not just Michigan, had noticed the change in behavior, and they all were worried, but Illinois didn't talk to any of them anymore.

Michigan wanted to storm back in there and demand answers from his brother, but...but he couldn't.

Michigan only hoped that whatever it was, Illinois would tell them eventually so they could smother him with love and support and help him through whatever he was going through.

No matter what Illinois claimed, those nightmares weren't normal, and Michigan would do everything in his power to help Illinois through them.

United States of Ameridad [Non-Canon]

Requested by an Anon on Tumblr. They wanted a oneshot that was like United States of Idiots but with America being a dad. I had so much fun writing this and I hope you enjoy it!

Alabama

America entered the living room, looking for Palau, as he needed to speak with her about something. However, when he did, he saw Alabama lying on the floor.

"Al?" He questioned, wondering what his son was doing. There was no response. America frowned and crouched down to look at Alabama, laughing as America realized he was asleep.

America began to move to pick Alabama up, careful not to wake him. America then walked out of the room, heading for Alabama's bedroom.

Then he heard Alabama groan, and he shifted in America's arms. America pulled him closer and paused, waiting for him to still again.

"You can sleep, Al. Just go back to sleep. I have you." He whispered before kissing Alabama on the forehead. A small smile spread across Alabama's face, and he stilled again.

"Mmm...okay, Pa..." Alabama slurred out tiredly. America pressed another kiss to his forehead. Alabama gigged.

"Paaa...." He slurred out through his giggles.

"Yes, Bama?" America asked, leaning down to kiss him again. Alabama tried to push America's face away.

"You....you're so embarrassing," Alabama said, yawning. America began walking again, trying to suppress his own yawns that came from seeing Alabama's.

"No, I'm just full of so much love!" America said, smiling widely and going to press another kiss to his face.

"Paaa...." Alabama said again, his eyes slipping closed again. America's smile widened. My children were so cute when they slept. He brushed some hair off Alabama's forehead before opening the door to his room.

America walked over and placed him on the bed before pressing another kiss to his forehead. Alabama protested quietly, but he was almost completely asleep again.

"Goodnight, Bama," America said before leaving the room, hoping his son would sleep well.

Alaska

"Adaŷ?" America heard Alaska say. America blinked sleepily, looking up from his paperwork, and turned to face Alaska, who was standing in the doorway and shifting his feet nervously.

"Lasky? What's wrong?" America asked, pulling down his pen. Alaska muttered something under his breath, too quiet for America to hear.

"Sdaŷ?" America asked, using the nickname Aleut had permitted him to use for Alaska. Alaska flinched. So, he had another nightmare about the Russian Empire. America held out his arms, and Alaska slowly walked over before hugging him.

America squeezed him tightly, and Alaska squeezed back.

"He would hate me." Alaska eventually said.

"He should. You are your own person. You aren't his servant, carbon

copy, or whatever he tried to make you. You are Alaska, your own person who can make his own decisions," America said, gently lifting his son's face to look at him. Alaska nodded, but America could see in his eyes that he didn't completely believe it.

Oh, Alaska. His poor son. Russian Empire had sunk his claws deep into Alaska. He constantly haunted Alaska, but it was these nights where it was the worst.

"Do you want to lie down?" America asked. Alaska nodded quickly before burying his face in his father's chest. America stood up, moved to the bed, sat Alaska on his lap, and began preening Alaska's wings to calm him.

"You always mess them up when you have nightmares," America pointed out once again, wondering if he would get an answer this time. Alaska remained silent, and America placed his chin on Alaska's shoulder, briefly pausing the preening.

"I love you, you know that?" America said. Alaska nodded, "Good. I'm very proud of you son. You are so strong."

Alaska began crying and turned around to pull America into a hug again, one of his wings jammed between them.

"Qaĝaasakung!" (Thank you!) He cried in his mothers tongue. "Qaĝaasakung! Qaĝaasakung! Txin yaxtakuq."

"Txin yaxtakuq." (I love you.) America responded.

Arizona

"Papí? Do you have any water?" Arizona asked as she approached America. Her face looked pale, and she seemed shaky.

"I do, but Ari, are you alright? You don't look very good." America said, walking over and putting his hand on her forehead.

"I'm fine." She said, but her voice sounded strained.

"Sunset, you look like you're about to pass out," America said.

"I'm fine, Papí." She said. America put his hand on her shoulder and guided her to a chair. Arizona practically collapsed into it.

"Xico! Can you get me some water?" America called over to the Land of Enchantment, who had just entered the room. She nodded and rushed off.

"Sunset, you don't look very good. Please tell me if you think you will pass out," America said, looking at her in concern. She sighed.

"The AC in my house broke...and so did the water. It...it got really hot. And..." Arizona's voice trailed off as her head dipped forward. She was breathing heavily, and she looked exhausted and sick.

"After Xico gets you that water, I'm going to take you to your room, okay?" America said. Arizona nodded.

"Kay Papí," she said. America sat down next to her and let her lean on him, rubbing her back in an attempt to help her feel better.

"I love you, Sunny. Tell me if you need anything to help you feel better." America said, pulling her into a side hug.

"Thank you for the offer. I love you too," she answered, leaning into the hug.

"I hope you feel better soon," America said. Arizona nodded.

"Me too. I hate being dehydrated. Makes me feel awful ."

Arkansas

"Hey, Pa," Arkansas said from behind me. America turned and smiled at him, although his face became concerned as he saw that Arkansas was covering his ears.

"Arkie, are your ears okay?" America asked. Arkansas frowned but slowly nodded, and America let out a sigh of relief.

"That's good, but why are you hiding them?" America asked.

"Promise you won't get mad?" he asked quietly. America nodded.

Arkansas slowly lowered his hands, revealing that he was wearing diamond earrings. He bit his lip and looked down.

"Arkie, you look great. When did you get them pierced?" America asked. He looked up, surprise on his face.

"You aren't mad?" He questioned.

"I did promise I wouldn't get mad." America pointed out. Arkansas looked away.

"Do you really like them, though? I know earrings are supposed to be girls' thing, but—"

"Arkansas, I had long hair down to just past my shoulder for my entire life as a colony, until 1815. And did you know that dresses used to be what little boys wore back when I was a child? Things change. And things are changing now. You getting your ears pierced is different, but not bad," America said.

Arkansas turned back to face America and nodded.

"Okay." He said, sounding like he wanted to cry, "Okay...thanks, Dad. But...do you think the others will like it? What if they hate me now? What if-"

"What if they love it? Just like I do." America said, cutting into his sentence before he made himself more worried than he needed to be.

"But what about Bama or Tex or...or everyone else in my region? What if they hate me for it? What if they kick me out like they did with Delly?" Arkansas asked.

"I'll talk to them about it. Besides, you aren't the only southern state to pierce his ears recently," America said. Arkansas looked surprised.

"Someone else did?"

"Florida."

"You know what that makes a lot of sense. Well, I guess Florida and I will be in this together. Thanks again, Pa."

"No problem, Diamond. And remember, if anyone makes fun of you, let me know." Arkansas smiled.

"I will, Dad."

California

America struggled to open the door to his bedroom, the papers in his hand making it difficult to grab the doorknob.

"Come on, you damned thing," America muttered, regretting his choice to grab the papers from his office. Maybe he should have just left them there.

When he finally opened the door, he noticed someone on his bed. Dropping the papers off on his desk, he walked over to see who it was. It was California, curled up on the bed. They looked half asleep, their eyes slowly slipping shut.

"Hello, Cali," America said. She slowly lifted their head and blinked.

"Oh. Hello Papa. I'm sleeping here, okay?" They asked. America nodded.

"You can sleep here," America answered, smiling. California gave a sleepy smile and returned her head to the bed, nuzzling into my pillow. America sat down next to them and ran his hand through their hair, pausing now and again to pet the fur on her ears.

California moved her head from the pillow and began nuzzling America's hand, her eyes still closed. America smiled and moved himself so he was in a good position to be their pillow.

"Sleep well, Cali," America said.

"Sleep with me," California muttered tiredly, cracking open one of her eyes.

"Maybe in a little bit," America said. They pouted, looking adorable

as they did so. His resolve crumbled. "Fine. I'll sleep."

California's face brightened, and she closed her eyes. America repeated her example, unsure whether he could fall asleep.

But he was willing to try for them.

Colorado

"Your land is beautiful," America commented as he looked over Colorado's mountains and valleys.

"Thanks, Dad," Colorado said from his seat as he opened a bag of trail mix.

"Wait, you have food? Share!" America said, walking over with plans of taking every single M&M.

"You're just going to steal all of the M&M's. Like you always do. Bring your own food when we go on a hike!" Colorado insisted, holding the bag close to his chest. America gasped and put his hand over his heart, and Colorado groaned, knowing his father was about to be overly dramatic.

"Fine. Just leave your poor father to starve. I see how it is. Kids these days. Ungrateful little shits." America said, walking to Colorado and pushing his hat over his eyes. Colorado groaned, pushing his hat back up.

"Dad, why are you like this?" he said. America grinned and sat down next to him.

"You were the one to invite me on the hike. You should have expected this," America said. Colorado sighed.

"You can have the M&Ms if you shut up," he said, holding the bag towards America.

America snatched the bag from his hand and rummaged through it, looking for the M&M's.

"Sugar thief," Colorado muttered.

"And proud of it!"

Connecticut

"Nutmeg?" America asked as they sat in the car.

"Yeah?" His son responded.

"What the hell is wrong with your traffic? It's been an hour, and we've moved, like, two inches." America said. Connecticut laughed.

"That's just how it is here. Blame New York." He said. America groaned, leaning his head back against the seat.

"When you offered to drive me from Boston to the UN headquarters, I said, 'Sure, that sounds fine. I've been meaning to spend more time with you,' because I was under the impression we'd get there before it started."

"Well, now you have plenty of time to spend with me. Just ditch me and go to New York four minutes before your meeting starts; you'll be fine. Until then, we can bond by sitting in traffic together." Connecticut said. America laughed.

"Sure, why not?" America said. Connecticut smiled.

"That's the spirit!"

"I am never driving through your roads again from Boston to New York again," America added quickly. Connecticut cackled at that.

"Fair enough, old man. Fair enough," he said, smiling. America rolled his eyes. Connecticut loved to call him an old man despite his age. Then again, most of the states did, including Virginia.

The car fell into a comfortable silence as they managed to move forward another two inches.

"So, Dad, while we're chatting, when are you going to therapy?" Connecticut asked, breaking the silence.

"Goodbye, Nutmeg. We can talk later," America said, quickly

sending himself to New York City for the meeting.

He loved his son, but like hell was he going to talk about getting therapy.

Delaware

Delaware's screams broke through the quiet of the night. Upon hearing them, America rushed to Delaware's room to wake him from the nightmare. When America entered the room, it was clear Delaware had been thrashing around, his horns tangled up in his sheet.

America quickly rushed over and ran his hand through Delaware's hair, muttering reassuring words. Slowly, Delaware stilled and calmed before his eyes opened. Upon seeing America, he looked away.

"Sorry for wak-"

"You have nothing to be sorry for. You didn't wake me." America said, cutting him off before he started a rant of apologies he didn't need to give.

"...okay," Delaware muttered after a moment.

"Do you want me to untangle your horns and then come and sleep in my room?" America asked. Delaware bit his lip.

"I can do my horns...but I would like to... sleep...in your room," Delaware slowly said. America nodded and watched as he unwrapped the sheets from his horns. He then stood up and walked to be next to America, grabbing his hand as he did so.

"Do you want a hug?" America asked. Delaware nodded and nearly knocked his father over with the force of his hug. America felt tears leak through his shirt, but he ignored them.

Delaware deserved a chance to cry.

Delaware then pulled away and smiled shakily.

"Thank...thank you....Da." America paused as Delaware called him the name he hadn't called him since the occupation.

"You're welcome, Little Diamond."

Florida

"Papí?" Florida asked America as the state sat in his lap.

"Yes, Florida?" America asked the newest state.

"Why don't you think I'm insane?" Florida asked. America paused his braiding of Florida's hair and looked at him in confusion.

"Why would I think you are insane?" America asked, confused at what prompted that question.

"Padre, Nueva España, he always said that I was insane and needed to be locked up because of it. And you don't say that, and it's confusing." Florida said. America stared at him in shock.

How could a father say that about his son, especially one like Florida? He was a sweet boy, very caring, and eager to get along with others.

"Papí?" Florida asked, probably waiting for a response. America opened his mouth, and Florida flinched.

"Hey, hey, kid, it's alright. I'm not going to hurt you." America said, and Florida looked away, "Florida, I love you. What New Spain did was wrong. He shouldn't have said those things. You are not insane. You are just a kid."

Florida's shoulder began to shake, and he looked like he was trying to hold back tears. Slowly, America hugged the state so he could move away if he wanted to. He leaned into it, and silent tears rolled down his face.

"Te amo Papí." He eventually said through the tears.

"Te amo Florida."

Georgia

"Thank you for helping me with this," Georgia said as they picked the peaches from the four trees around her house.

"No problem. I got promised free fruit, so you know I'm in." America said jokingly. Georgia rolled her eyes and threw a rotten peach at him.

"Stop being down for things because you get food. Help your children for the joy of helping them!" she lectured jokingly. America rolled his eyes and smiled fondly, looking for a rotten peach to throw at her.

Once he found a suitable one, he grabbed it and quickly threw it at her head. Georgia stumbled as the head hit her head and turned to face America, tiny bits of peach caught in her hair. America tried to keep from laughing, but he couldn't hold back the giggles, so he just began laughing, his head off.

"Real mature Dad," Georgia said, as America began laughing so hard his knees were growing weak.

His laughter was cut off when a peach hit him in the chest. America looked up at Georgia and saw her smirking.

"You wanted a food fight, Dad."

"You threw the first peach!" He argued back. Georgia rolled her eyes.

"Technicalities," she said before throwing another peach at him. America yelped and dodged, then began searching for his own peaches to throw back at her.

It's been a while since America was a part of a food fight.

District of Columbia

"Hey Dee," America said, standing next to his crying daughter, who was holding papers clenched in her fists.

"Thank you so much," she said, bringing the papers to her chest.

"It was a long time coming. Your people deserved to vote, and I'm glad we got it to pass," America said. DC hugged him.

"I'm glad my people finally have this right. I'm glad I finally have it." She said. America smiled and returned the hug.

"I'm glad you have it, too. The other states are probably glad as well. Maybe. Someone will probably act mad just because they can." America said. DC laughed.

"Don't worry, Dad. I can handle that. After all, I have dealt with Congress for a very long time, and they are much worse," DC said.

"And you are amazing for doing that. Seriously, Dee, I don't know what I'd do without you," he said, pulling away.

"Never sleep for one," DC said. America rolled his eyes.

"You don't sleep either."

"Bad habit I picked up from you," DC responded. America smiled again, squeezing her gently, putting his arm over her shoulder.

"Love you, Dee."

"I love you too, Dad."

Idaho

"FUCK!" America yelled as he lost control of his skis and fell into the snow. He lay there, thoroughly embarrassed, as he heard someone slide to a halt beside him.

"That was quite a fall, Dad," Idaho said. America groaned and pulled himself out of the snow. Realizing that one of his skis was no longer on his foot, he looked around for it and saw it sitting a few feet away in the snow.

"I realized. My head hurts now from smacking it on the snow." America said. Idaho winced.

"Ouch. Want to get a doctor to look at it." She asked.

"Nah. I've gotten enough concussions to know this isn't one," America answered. Idaho shrugged.

"Fair enough, Pops." She said, "Though you said you could ski though."

"I can, Ida. I just had one fall. It was bad luck. That's all it is," he answered.

"Sure, Dad. I'll believe that so your precious ego can be saved." Idaho said, probably smiling underneath her ski mask.

"I can ski!" He insisted as Idaho began skiing backward down the hill.

"Sure you can." She answered as she grew further away.

"Ida, I can ski!" America said before putting his ski back on.

"Then come and catch me, Pops!" Idaho yelled before turning around.

"Fine, I will, you little shit!" America yelled back at her before skiing down the hill to her.

Illinois

"Hello, Noi!" America said as his son walked through the front door. He had been away from home for the past five days.

"Dad! You're awake!" Illinois said, his voice sounding off, a bit strained. He had a jacket in his hand that he held to his side.

"Of course I'm awake, Noi. It might be three a.m., but that doesn't mean I'm going to be asleep," America said.

"Of course it doesn't," Illinois muttered, looking stressed. His eyes darted back and forth, and he seemed very nervous.

"Noi? Are you okay?" America asked. Illinois nodded, but his

nervousness just seemed to increase. His hand pressed down harder on the jacket, and then he flinched. America saw him look away.

"Noi, can you put the jacket down?" America asked, knowing that something was wrong. Under the jacket, he had to be hiding an injury or something else. Illinois flinched, and tears appeared in his eyes.

"Please don't ask questions. Please, Dad." He said, his voice sounding desperate and scared. America was very concerned now but agreed. He seemed more distressed by America's questions than he was about America finding out what he was hiding under his jacket. Was it something else he had stolen because of his kleptomania? He knew America wouldn't get upset over that. It's not his fault at all.

Illinois dropped the jacket, revealing a bleeding wound on his side.

"My god, Noi!" America said, rushing over and examining the wound. It was steadily weeping blood, and he guided Noi to a chair, which he sat on quickly. He closed his eyes and sighed.

"We need to get you to a hospital," America said. His eyes shot open and showed terror.

"Please! Don't!" He said. America gave him a concerned look.

"Noi, I can't not take you to a hospital," America said.

"Please. *Please* treat it here." Illinois begged, his eyes showing desperation as well as terror. America wanted to get him to a hospital so badly...but that idea terrified him.

"Fine, I'll treat it here," America said, wondering why he didn't want to go to a hospital besides the medical bills. Illinois' body seemed to go limp with relief.

"*Thank you,* Dad," he said. America sighed, still wishing he could take Illinois to the hospital.

That was a bad injury.

What the hell happened to him?

Indiana

"Indy I still have no idea what the hell you are talking about," America said. Indiana pushed herself out from underneath the car, giving her father an odd look.

"Pops, you are over four hundred years old. You saw the car be invented. How the hell do you not know how to fix them?" She asked. America blushed, embarrassed.

"I do...kinda...but how am I supposed to fix whatever the hell Florida did to it?" America said, crossing his arms and trying to hide his embarrassment.

"He just filled the engine and exhaust pipe with silly string."

"Yeah, I don't know what that'll do to a car!"

"Don't worry, it's fine," Indiana said. America sighed in relief. That was good news.

"Thanks, Indy. I'm so happy I have a car genius in the family," he said, and Indiana laughed.

"Is that the only reason you like me?"

"You did make an adorable child. I remember all the times you would go outside and eat grass a—" America was cut off by Indiana trying to push him out of her garage, embarrassed by the story he loved to tell.

"Alright, Pops. It's good to see you, but I have to get back to fixing up some cars that I'm being paid to look at," Indiana said, shooting America a slight glare. He laughed.

"I pay you in fatherly love."

"I am going to kick your ass."

Iowa

"Papa! Papa! Look!" Iowa said, rushing over to her father, followed by New York and Pennsylvania, smiling wildly. Iowa flapped her still-small wings and slowly rose a few inches off the ground. America clapped his hands together.

"Amazing Iowa! Look at you! I'm so proud." Iowa smiled widely, showing off her missing front tooth, before laughing.

"I'm a proper bird now! Like Yorkie!" she said. New York smiled, watching Iowa with fondness in his eyes.

"Yes, you are Iowa!" America said, laughing too. Iowa flew slightly higher until she was the same height as his arms.

"Hold me, Papa," she requested. America reached out and grabbed her, and Iowa stopped flying. Her body became heavier in his arms. America pulled her closer to his chest, and Iowa hugged him.

"Imma be the best bird kid, Papa." She whispered in his ear, "But don't tell Penny or Yorkie that."

America looked over her head to see the two states giggling quietly, meaning they had probably heard her.

"Yes, you will. And don't worry; I won't say anything," America said. Iowa nodded.

"Good. Good Papa." She said before yawning.

"Does the best bird kid need her rest?" America asked. Iowa shushed him.

"Quiet, Papa. They could hear you," she said. America smiled and lowered his voice to a whisper.

"I'm sorry. Does the best bird kid need her sleep?" He asked. Iowa nodded and rested her head on his shoulder.

"Can you be my bed, Papa? You are comfy," she asked. America smiled widely, loving whenever his kids wanted to sleep on him.

"Of course, I can be your bed Iowa."

"Thank you, Papa. I love you."

"I love you too, best bird kid," America said, running his hand through Iowa's hair as she fell asleep.

Kansas

"Thank you for helping me, Dad," Kansas said as America helped her dig a hole for her sunflower seeds.

"No problem, Sunflower," America said. She smiled brightly, as she always did when America called her that.

"Dad, I do have one question," Kansas asked.

"What is it?" America asked as he pushed the dirt into the hole he had just placed some seeds in,

"Why are you digging the holes with your hands? What's wrong with a shovel?"

"Your father is old. That's what's wrong with a shovel," America answered. Kansas snorted.

"My old man prefers digging with his bare hands like a weirdo."

"No, Missouri and California dig holes with their bear hands. I dig holes with my people hands." America said, trying to hold back laughter.

"Oh my god," Kansas said, groaning slightly. America began laughing at that comment. "That was such a bad joke, Dad."

"I think the joke was bear-y excellent," America said before returning to his cackling. Kansas groaned again.

"Stop making bear puns, please."

"Why? Are they un-bear-able?" America asked, smiling. Kansas looked like she wanted to kill him.

"I'm getting Nebraska to help me. I can't deal with this." Kansas

said, rubbing her forehead.

"Deal with what? I'm just making some jokes." America said. Kansas glared at him.

"Those puns are awful, and you know it. And don't you dare make another one!" Kansas said, holding up a shovel. America nodded.

"Sure thing, Kan! Have fun with your flowers!"

Kentucky

"Dada! Uppy!" Kentucky babbled, reaching out for his father. America picked up the small three-year-old and held him close.

"Hello, little one," America said, lightly tapping his nose. Kentucky briefly looked cross-eyed, trying to look at his nose, before laughing.

"Dada! 'Gin!" he called out, saying what seemed to be his two favorite words: America's name and Virginia's.

"Do you want to see Ginny?" America asked him as they approached the room Virginia shared with Maryland.

"'Gin! 'Gin! Wanna see!' Kentucky cried, clapping his hands together. America smiled. This kid was adorable. America loved him so much. America would kill for him. He was so cute, tiny, and precious, and he couldn't believe Kentucky was my kid.

We walked into Virgina's room, only to see her sneaking out of the window in men's clothes.

"Kenny, you little snitch." She muttered.

"'Gin! Ginny! Virginny!" Kentucky said.

"Hello, Virginia," America said, smiling, amused at what he saw.

"Bye, Father!" She said before jumping out the window. America turned to look at Kentucky, who was smiling widely.

"Well, Kenny, it looks like your big sister has plans," America told him. Kentucky pouted, making America's heart melt and making him feel sad and guilty. Who gave this kid the right to be this cute?

"Dada. I wanna be with Gin!" he said, looking up at me with his big brown, sad eyes. He looked like he was about to start crying. America needed to do something before he started crying; otherwise, America would start crying.

"Why don't we see the horses?" America said, knowing Kentucky always loved them. Kentucky perked up.

"Horsey? Horsey ride?" He asked. America smiled.

"Yes, we can ride the horses," America said. Kentucky clapped his hands together and smiled widely.

"Yay! Horsey ride!"

Louisiana

"Hey Dad...can I...talk to you?" Louisiana said hesitantly, walking into America's room. He turned to face his daughter and nodded.

"What's up?" She looked nervous and on the verge of tears. America's concern grew, "Ana? You alright?"

"I...I have something important to tell you." She said, opening her mouth like she would continue, but nothing came out.

"Do you want a hug?" America asked. Louisiana nodded, and he pulled her into a hug and rubbed small circles into her back.

"You know how South Carolina told you in the 1980s that she was a girl and not a boy?" Louisiana eventually said, pulling away.

"Yeah, do you feel the same way?" America asked. Louisiana shook her head and paused.

"Kinda? I...sometimes I feel like a girl. But also, sometimes, I feel like a boy. And sometimes I feel like neither. It's called being genderfluid. I know that that is we-"

"What do you feel like now?" America asked gently. Louisiana looked up at him.

"W-what?"

"What gender do you feel like now?" he repeated.

"A-a boy." He said. America nodded.

"Alright, then, son. Do you need anything that will help you feel more like a boy? Like more pants or things like that? We can go out and buy some if you want." America said. Tears welled up in Louisiana's eyes, and he pulled America into a hug.

"Thank you, Popá," he said, his arms gripping America tightly. America hugged him back and kissed him on the cheek.

"You're welcome, fils."

Maine

"Papa? Can you tell me a story about Massy when he was little? He keeps calling me cute, and I want to prove to him that he used to be cute." Maine said, walking up to America in all his six-year-old glory.

"You don't think Massy is cute?" America asked, amused. Maine shook his head.

"Massy is ugly. Like the demon things he talks about. Papa, is Massy a demon?" Maine asked. America laughed, imagining Massachusetts' reaction to that comment.

"No, your big brother isn't a demon. He's just another state, like you." He said. Maine crossed his arms.

"I think he would be a good demon. He's scary and loud." Maine said.

"Don't call him a demon because he's loud; that's mean. And what do you mean, 'he's scary'?" America asked, wondering if something had happened between Massachusetts and Maine.

"Because he yells at York and everyone else and says he will hit them, and so he's scary like a demon," Maine said. America sighed. It seems like he'll have to talk to Massachusetts about screaming at his siblings when Maine is around.

"Don't worry, Maine. Massy just likes yelling, the same way Dee likes helping others. He won't actually do it; it's a joke. If he doesn't, you tell me, and I'll get that boy in big trouble," America said. Maine nodded.

"I will be the best at this job. I'll protect my big brothers and big sisters from him!" Maine said. America nodded.

"I'm sure they will appreciate it." Maine smiled and nodded.

America would have to ask the rest of New England to join in on this. Not that any of them would dislike a chance to call Massachusetts a demon.

Maryland

"Alright, Dad! Pull up the crab trap now!" Maryland called to America, who nodded and pulled it up, revealing two crabs inside.

"Nice! If any of my other traps have more, maybe we can eat some." Maryland commented as she looked over the trap, "Thanks for agreeing to do this with me, Dad."

"No problem, Mary," America said, smiling.

"Wish Delly could have come, though. Would have more fun." Maryland said.

"Are you saying I'm not fun?" America asked jokingly, putting a hand over his heart.

"Well, Delly is certainly more fun than you," Maryland said.

"Careful now, Mary. I wouldn't want you to end up in the Chesapeake," America said.

"Threatening to push me into the bay? What a father you are."

Maryland said, shaking her head.

"Can't tell if that's a compliment or an insult."

"Take it as you will."

"Ah, got it. It's an insult."

"Yep! Love you, Dad." Maryland chirped cheerily. America smiled slightly and rolled his eyes.

"Love you too, you little gremlin."

Massachusetts

America smiled as he watched Massachusetts tuck Connecticut into bed after about twenty minutes of fighting between them.

"You don't have to do that Mass," America said as the commonwealth exited the room. Massachusetts shrugged.

"It's not a big deal. I was doing it before we had our own bodies, and I'm fine doing it." Massachusetts said.

"That's not what I mean. I mean, I know I wasn't there to help any of you because...of... well, everything, but now that I know about you guys, I want to give you a chance to be kids," America said. Massachusetts smiled.

"Alright, but first, you gotta stop blaming yourself for not knowing. Anyone would have thought they were crazy if they had more than one person in their head. Second, Uncle James helped a lot." Massachusetts said. America sighed.

"I know...I know. I just want to give you the chance to be a kid." America said. Massachusetts smiled, pulling his dad into a hug.

"I'd like that," he said. America smiled, returning the hug.

"I'm glad."

"This means you're tucking me into bed, right?" Massachusetts

asked. America laughed.

"Sure thing, kid," America said, picking Massachusetts up, gaining a laugh from his oldest son.

America smiled, grateful to be with them like this.

It was amazing.

Michigan

The Civil War had been rough on everyone, with so many people being injured and killed, including America's states. However, the most injured had to be Pennsylvania and Michigan, with both having lost a limb, an arm, and a wing, respectively.

From everything he had heard through letters, Pennsylvania was handing it better than Michigan, who had become melancholy and withdrawn.

Losing his wing to his sister nonetheless made it hard for him.

"I don't need help, Dad, I'm fine." Michigan insisted as America dropped by his house to check in on him.

"Michigan," America said, causing the state to pause.

"I don't want your pity," he snapped, voice bitter. "I lost my wings because, apparently, family means nothing to Mississippi, and now I just have to deal with being grounded for the rest of my life."

"I'm not here to pity you. I just want to make sure you're doing okay."

"I can't fly, Dad. How do you think I'm doing?" Michigan snapped.

"I know. And I know I can't do anything to change that, not now, at least. But Michigan, I'm worried about you. Please, just let me help," America said. Michigan bit his lip and looked away, his face hesitant.

"Fine. I'll try not to push you all away," Michigan said, his shoulders

slumping. America gave him a mournful look and pulled him into a hug.

"I'm so sorry, Mitch," he said, and that seemed to have broken through some sort of wall as Michigan began sobbing on America's shoulder.

America held his son close and wished he could do more to help.

But this was all he could really do for now.

Minnesota

America entered the kitchen and saw Minnesota sitting at the table, her head in her arms.

"Hey, Minnie, are you okay?" America asked. Minnesota lifted her head, revealing her eyebags and exhausted expression.

"I'm fine. I'm just waiting for my food to heat up," she said, gesturing to the microwave before yawning. Biting back his own yawn, America noticed that the microwave was not on.

"Minnie, you forgot to turn it on," America said with a little laugh before turning to Minnesota. He saw her head held up by her hand, and her eyes were closed. "Minnie?"

Minnesota's head jerked up, "I'm awake."

"Only partially. You need some sleep, Minnie."

"Like you're one to talk." She said, yawning again.

"I slept four hours last night, so I think I can tell you to sleep," America said before walking over to her, putting his hand on her shoulder.

"I'm not that tired," Minnesota said.

"Minnesota, you are literally falling asleep right now," America said as Minnesota jerked her head back up again.

"No, I'm not!" America sat beside her and gave her a small side hug, allowing her to rest her head on his chest.

"Try to sleep a little," America said. Minnesota groaned and flipped him off, but America could see her eyes closing as she fought to stay awake. He kissed the top of her head and smiled, "Sweet dreams, Sota."

Mississippi

"Do you like it, Papa?" Mississippi asked as she walked into my office. America looked up and saw that Mississippi's flag had changed from the interim flag she had used since her old one was disused.

"It's beautiful, and you have a magnolia on it. Now I have even more reason to call you Magnolia, Maggy," America said. Mississippi smiled widely.

"I like it a lot too. It... feels therapeutic, healing, you know. Finally, I'm removing the mark of that war from my flag, even if I can't fully remove it from my state," Mississippi said.

"I'm glad you feel like you are healing from it, Magnolia." Mississippi smiled.

"I'm glad I am too. After all, as we states heal from it, maybe you can too," Mississippi said before walking up to America and hugging him.

"I love you, Pa. Thank you for supporting me. And not thinking I'm bad like everyone thinks." America returned the hug.

"People talk a lot of shit about you because of your flag. Maybe with this new one, more of my people can see the Maggy I do. You've made mistakes, but who hasn't? The important thing is that you want to change. That's what matters. Not your past mistakes. You want to fix them. And that says more about you than your mistakes ever will." America said. Mississippi squeezed him tighter.

"Thank you, Papa." She said before pulling away.

"You're welcome, Maggy. Now, go out there and show off your lovely new flag. I'm sure all of your siblings will love it."

"Oh, I know they will."

Missouri

"Souri, how are you feeling?" America asked as he walked into his sick son's room, holding some chicken noodle soup to give him.

"I think something is trying to claw its way out of my throat," Missouri rasped, his eyes cracking open. America frowned, placing the soup on a table and feeling his forehead. It was burning hot.

"You don't feel or sound well either. You think you can eat some soup?" America asked. Missouri shook his head.

"No. Too much hurt." He said, closing his eyes. America walked over and sat down next to him on the bed, not liking the sound of his wheezy breaths. Missouri suddenly began coughing, loud, grating coughs that made it sound like he was coughing up a lung.

"Try sleeping then. Maybe you'll feel better when you wake up," America suggested. Missouri groaned.

"I've tried. It doesn't work," he rasped. America frowned and hugged his son.

"Do you think you'll sleep better now?" America asked. Missouri put his head on his chest and nodded, "Good. I'll stay here as long as you need me to."

"Can you sing that lullaby? The one you sang when I was younger?" Missouri asked. America nodded and began singing quietly to Missouri.

America really hoped he would get better soon.

Montana

"I'm so glad you haven't forgotten how to do this," Montana commented. America laughed.

"Tana, horses were the only means of land travel I had for most of my life. Why would I forget?" he asked.

"Because your memory is failing," Montana answered, straight-faced.

"What? No, it isn't! My memory is fine!"

"Exactly what someone losing their memory would say." She stated.

"Tana! I'm not losing my memory!"

"Sure you aren't." She said with a grin as she sped up.

"You are one little shit," America said, moving to get next to her.

"But you still love me."

"Yeah, I know I do. It doesn't stop you from being mean," he said. Montana laughed.

"I'm not mean. I'm honest." She said. America rolled his eyes.

"I should not have agreed to this."

"And deny your beautiful daughter a chance to spend time with her father? For shame, Dad, for shame." She said, putting a hand dramatically to her forehead.

"Yeah, I'm going to leave now."

"Wait, Dad, don't. I was joking. Your memory is great!"

Nebraska

"Hey, Dad, where's the extra tissues?" Nebraska asked, walking up to America holding an empty box of tissues, sniffling slightly.

"American Samoa took them to use for his birthday gift for Hawaii. What is it? Do you need more?" America asked. Nebraska nodded.

"I think I got a head cold. I have a super runny nose, and I feel like someone is repeatedly slamming a hammer into my skull." Nebraska

said.

"Yikes. I'll buy you some more and tell everyone to keep quiet if you want to rest in your room," America said. Nebraska sniffed, nodded, and walked over to America.

"Thanks, Dad." He said, pulling America into a hug.

"You're welcome. Want me to leave now?" America asked. Nebraska shook his head.

"Can you please carry me back to my room? I want to rest a bit." He said.

"Sure I can," America said, scooping his son into his arms. Nebraska put his head on America's shoulder and smiled.

"Thank you, Dad. You're the best."

"No problem, Brasky. I love you, and I hope you feel well soon."

"Me too. This headache is very annoying." Nebraska closed his eyes as he did that.

"I know how that feels. I've walked out of every UN meeting with a headache."

"That sucks. I bet mine is worse, though." Nebraska commented. America laughed.

"Maybe it is."

Nevada

"I love hiking in your land, Vada. It's so beautiful." America said with a small smile.

"If only more people would see that. I hate that all everyone sees is Vegas. There's way more to be than gambling." Nevada grumbled.

"Well, I see more to you than Vegas. I see your beautiful mountains, amazing personality, pretty horse ears that make you look like

someone from Equestria Girls and five arrest warrants. The FBI still won't get rid of them," America said. Nevada groaned.

"Why did Nia have to show you that movie? Why did she have to tell everyone about it? I haven't had a moment of peace since. Seriously. Some people on Twitter have asked me if that movie was real and if I knew Twilight Sparkle! It's awful!" Nevada complained. America laughed.

"Have people really asked you that?"

"Yes! I hate it!"

"Vada, my boy, that sounds awful," America said, trying to hold back laughter. Nevada smacked the back of my leg with his tail.

"Shut up, Dad, you ass." He said. America smiled.

"Sorry, Vada, but you have to admit, it's pretty funny," America said.

"I guess it is, but that doesn't stop it from being annoying." He said. America smiled and put his arm around Nevada's shoulders.

"Don't worry, Vada, I'll never ask if you are from the same universe as Twilight Sparkle."

"Dad. Please. Please shut up."

New Hampshire

"How are you so good at this, Dad?" New Hampshire asked as America climbed up the mountain.

"California loves climbing in Yosemite and drags me along a lot. And no offense, Hamp, but she has way harder mountains to climb than you." America answered.

"That's fair. Still, I didn't expect you to be beating me." She responded.

"I'm not beating you if it's not a race," America said, pausing. He

heard New Hampshire groan, and he laughed.

"That is such a dad thing to say." She groaned, "And now I want to make this a race."

"Well, I have a head start, so I think that's unfair," America said.

"Are you doubting my ability to kick your ass?" New Hampshire said, coming up beside him, "Also, you no longer have a head start. Let's race."

America laughed, "Alright, alright. We'll race. What does the winner get?"

"Bragging rights." New Hampshire said before she started up the mountain again.

"Oh, come on, Hamp. Really? That's totally cheating," America said as he followed.

"Sounds like you are just a sore loser, Dad."

New Jersey

America was walking down the hall when he heard the sound of choked sobs coming from New Jersey's room. Worried, America opened the door to check on him. New Jersey was curled up on the bed in the fetal position, and he quickly pulled himself up when he heard the door open.

He turned around, tears staining his face. When he saw America, his eyes widened, and he began trying to wipe away the tears.

"Dad!" He exclaimed, hopping out of his bed.

"Are you okay?" America asked, approaching him. New Jersey nodded.

"Of course I'm fine! I'm New Jersey!" he said. America crossed his arms. "I'm telling the truth, Dad!"

"You were crying," America stated.

"No, I wasn't! I'm New Jersey! I don't-can't cry! I don't show those emotions. I don't have them!" He said. America felt awful that New Jersey thought that way. A part of it was probably his fault. He should have helped New Jersey sooner and stopped the jokes and taunting.

But America didn't.

America walked over to New Jersey and pulled him into a hug.

"It's okay to cry, NJ. You have more emotions than anger, no matter what your siblings say," Ameica said. New Jersey gripped me right, and his sobbing resumed, though much quieter and slower.

That was okay. America would help him heal and help him understand his emotions better as time went on.

He deserved to be able to express himself fully.

New Mexico

"I'm glad you decided to come with me." New Mexico said. America smiled.

"So am I. It's nice to get away, especially with my government seemingly trying to kill me with work. I hate being the world power," he said. New Mexico laughed.

"Really? I haven't heard that before." She said. America rolled his eyes.

"I don't complain about it that much." he insisted.

"Yes, you do."

"This is slander on my amazing reputation," America said jokingly.

"You have a good reputation?" New Mexico said with a cheeky grin. America flipped her off, and she laughed.

"I'm sure some people think of me in a positive light, like you."

"If I say yes, will you buy me ice cream?" She asked. America laughed.

"You and your siblings are all little shits."

"We got it from you." New Mexico answered.

"What? No, you didn't." America said, confused. New Mexico rolled her eyes.

"One day, you'll take a good long look at your life and realize I have a point."

"And that day will never come."

New York

"I haven't slept in twenty hours." New York said, sitting on the couch and resting his head on America's chest.

"I've been up for two days. Are you trying to sleep on me?" America asked. New York nodded.

"We can both sleep together. I'll be good for us." He said.

"I have work I need to do, Yorkie," America said, moving New York's head off of him and resting it on the couch. America stood up, swaying as he nearly blacked out, before regaining his balance and starting to walk towards his room.

Then, he felt something grab his leg, and he looked down to see New York sitting behind him, clinging to his leg.

"No, Pap. You are sleeping with me, please. I want you to." He said.

"Yorkie, I—"

"No! No excuses. Sleeping time is now." He stood up slightly and tried to drag America to the couch but was unsuccessful. America sighed, knowing that New York wasn't planning on releasing him anytime soon.

Maybe America could just wait for him to fall asleep.

America walked back to the couch, and New York crawled into his lap, his head resting just over America's heart.

"I love you, Dad," he said. America ran his hand through New York's hair and closed his eyes.

America will open them in a few minutes.

North Carolina

"Planes! I love them! Which is why I want you to learn how to fly one!" North Carolina said, his face alight with excitement. America laughed nervously.

"Do I have to? This doesn't exactly look safe." America said. North Carolina laughed.

"Come on, Dad! This is the future of transportation, and it will be important to know how to use it."

"But will it really? They can't exactly hold lots of people." America pointed out, trying to come up with another reason other than his fear for why he shouldn't do this.

"Not yet! Come on, Dad. You know how progress is, being as old as you are!" North Carolina insisted.

"Okay, first, did you really need to call me old? Second, you have a point, and I don't like that." America said.

"Oh my goodness, are you *scared*?" North Carolina asked.

"No!" America insisted, crossing his arms.

"You totally are! I didn't expect this from you, Dad!" He said, laughing again.

"Shut up, please. I just don't feel like crashing to the ground."

"Don't worry, Dad, I'm a professional. I'll make sure we don't crash!"

He said.

"I still don't want to."

"Too, and you don't have a choice. Get into the plane, Pa!" America sighed and walked over to the plane, knowing he couldn't get out of this one.

North Dakota

"God, kill me now!" North Dakota moaned as he flopped dramatically on the couch.

"What's up with you?"Ameirca asked, amused at his antics.

"I feel nauseous, and it's awful, so I want God to strike me down." He said.

"Do you want any medicine, or just want to lay here with a trash can?" America asked as North Dakota grabbed a pillow to bury his face in.

"Both would be nice." He said. America nodded and walked up to grab the items. When he got back, he noticed North Dakota looked much paler. America quickly gave him the trash can and threw it up, tears streaking down his face as he did so. America gently rubbed his back as he puked.

After a few more seconds, he placed the trash can back down and leaned against America.

"I don't think I can swallow the medicine without puking it back up." He muttered. America nodded and continued rubbing his back.

"That's alright, Northie. You just rest and take it when you're ready. I'll stay with you until you do."

"Thanks, Dad. That...that's nice of you." He said, closing his eyes.

"I'm your father. It's always my job to be nice to you when you need help."

Ohio

"Papa," Ohio said, walking over and clinging to America's leg. Ohio was America's youngest and newest son, and he quickly learned that Ohio loved to hug people and cling to them.

"Hello, Ohio," America said, leaning down to pat the physically seven-year-old child on the head. He smiled widely and squeezed America's leg tighter.

"I love you, Papa." He said. America smiled.

"I love you too. Would you like me to pick you up?" he asked. Ohio nodded eagerly, and America picked him up off the ground, cradling Ohio close to his chest. Ohio lifted his hand and put it to his face.

"Does Penny hate me?" He asked. America shook his head.

"She loves you; she just has to do other things, so she can't always be around you," America said. Ohio pouted.

"But I want to give Penny hugs and hold her, too. She doesn't want to do that, so she hates me!" Ohio said, sounding distressed.

"Oh, is that what you think? Don't worry, 'Hio, I'll talk to Penny about it and ensure you get your hugs." Ohio brightened and smiled widely before hugging me the best he could.

"Thank you, Papa! I love you!"

"I love you too," America said as he ran a hand through Ohio's hair and rocked him until he fell asleep, still holding America tightly. He was so clingy.

America loved him.

Oklahoma

Oklahoma clung tightly to America's arm, his small eight-year-old body wrapped completely around it. He whimpered slightly, and America ran his fingers through Oklahoma's sweaty hair, hoping

that his fever would break soon. He was getting too hot for America's liking.

"Pap, it hurts. My head hurts." He whimpered out quietly.

"I know. I know it does, Okie. I'm sorry I can't help you more." America said.

"Pap, it hurts." He whimpered again. America felt heartbreak at his words and wished he could do anything to help Oklahoma.

Why did Oklahoma have to get so sick? He's just a child, a baby. He was just given a body a few months ago. Why did he have to get this sick?

"I'm sorry, Oak. I can't do anything," America said. He whimpered and pressed his face into America's arm.

"I want it to all go away, *please*." He begged. America frowned.

"Do you want to try and fall asleep? I can sing you your lullaby if that helps." America asked him.

"Too much hurt for sleep." He muttered. America nodded.

"I'm still going to sing you your lullaby. Maybe it will help you focus on something other than the pain," America asked. He nodded.

"Okay, Papa. Thank you. I love you." He muttered before closing his eyes as America began singing, doing his best to lull him to sleep.

Oregon

"The time has come! Our ultimate revenge is coming. Finally, after months of torture, we will strike back!" Oregon said before laughing evilly.

"Oregon, we are throwing water balloons filled with mayo at them." America deadpanned. Oregon crossed her arms.

"Dad, stop ruining my fun. I've always wanted to feel like an evil

mastermind, and I am not letting you ruin this for me!" She said. America sighed.

"How did I even get roped into this prank war?" he muttered.

"My evil genius," Oregon said, smiling.

"I guess it was kinda evil genius. You made me think these mayo balloons were for Dad," America said. Oregon waved her hand dismissively.

"The extras can be for Britain." She said. America nodded.

"Alright, I'm convinced this is a good idea that will never go wrong now," he said. Oregon gave another evil laugh.

"Like I said, my evil genius always ensures I have allies. Now, shhh, I see Ida, and she's our first target. Prepare the balloons, my minion!"

Pennsylvania

"This is hard," Pennsylvania said, trying to make herself breakfast. She was most likely still getting used to only having one arm.

"I can help if-" America offered before being cut off.

"No!" Pennsylvania said before her shoulders slumped, "No, I don't want help. I want to learn how to cook and do things with one arm. I know you want to help, but please, Daed, I need to do this alone." She said. America nodded.

"Sorry then. If I'm being overbearing." He said.

"You...aren't always being that way. I know you want to help and make things easier." Pennsylvania said before sighing.

The kitchen fell into a brief silence before Pennsylvania spoke up again.

"If you still want to help, just wait for me to ask. You were gone when my injury happened, gone after the war ended. I've had time

to learn how to do things on my own. This isn't new to me, even if it seems that way to you. I know my limits, and I know when I will need to ask for help. I appreciate the fact that you want to help, but wait for me to ask for it before you offer or try to help. Okay Daed?"

"Okay, Penny. Thank you for...explaining why I'm annoying. I'll remember this next time I think you might want or need help. Please let me know if I keep doing it, though," America said. Pennsylvania nodded.

"I will, Daed. Thank you for understanding."

Rhode Island

"Dad! Can I sit on your shoulders?" Rhode Island asked his father, who smiled and picked up Rhode Island before placing him on America's shoulders.

"Sure you can. What for?" America asked. He felt Rhode Island place his hands on top of America's head.

"Texas is being a dick about the fact that he is tall, so I've decided that I must be taller than him to be an asshole right back. Therefore, we end up here, with me on your shoulders, to be the tallest American state." He said. America laughed at his explanation, finding it a good reason.

"Want to go find Texas so you can show off your height?" America asked him.

"Oh, absolutely. It's time that asshole gets what's coming for him...again." Rhode Island said.

"Again?" America asked, thinking he might be referencing when Alaska joined their family.

"Alaska, our beloved taller ally. A true friend of the short people." Rhode Island. America laughed.

"That's because most of his family are short people,"

"You are correct. Now onwards, Father! We have an asshole to

mock!"

South Carolina

"Hey, Dad, can I talk to you?" South Carolina asked.

"Sure thing, South, what's up?" Ameirca asked.

"I...I..." South Carolina began, sounding like he was having trouble saying what he wanted to say: "I'm a girl."

America blinked, not expecting that. "Oh, oh, okay. That's not what I expected. So...do you want, like, a dress or something...?"

He wasn't sure how to handle this. At all.

"You aren't going to tell me that's wrong. Inhumane?" South Carolina asked.

"You are the personification of a state." America pointed out, not sure what to say or what to feel. South Carolina let out a little laugh at that.

"You have a point there. I just...wasn't expecting immediate acceptance." H-she said.

"Not all of my people like people like you, but people like you are also my people. I...am divided, much more than I would like to be if I wanted to support you better, but...I still love you, and...I...our relationship has had enough damage done," America told her. South Carolina smiled and pulled America into a tight hug.

"Thank you, Dad."

"You're welcome. But seriously, do you want a dress?"

South Dakota

"I am so tired." South Dakota said, walking up to America and leaning against his chest.

"That sucks. Have you tried sleeping?" America asked. South Dakota

flipped America off, and he laughed.

"I am trying to sleep." She said.

"Are you going to go to bed?" America asked.

"You are much more comfortable, Dad." She said. America smiled.

"I could probably be more comfortable if I sat down," America said, maneuvering them to a couch, where he laid South Dakota on top of him.

"Yes, this is more comfortable. Thank you for being an amazing bed, Dad," she said, which made America laugh.

"You're welcome, Dak," He said, braiding his daughter's hair as she drifted off in his lap. America loved being their pillow, and he was glad his kids loved and trusted him enough to be one.

Besides, they were all adorable when they slept.

Tennessee

"I cannot believe you never told me how good at playing the piano you are, Pa!" Tennessee said.

"Dad made all of us learn the piano. He said it was a good instrument to play. Scotland said he was a liar. Then, he taught Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia the bagpipes. Then those two raised hell in the house," America said, laughing at the memory.

"Sounds like fun." As she tuned her guitar, Tennessee said, "You should play a gig with me someday. I'm sure we would be amazing together."

"Oh, sorry, Nessie. I don't play that much anymore. I have bad memories," America said. Tennessee frowned.

"Well, I can't say I'm not disappointed, but I understand your reasoning. Maybe we can just play together, the two of us." Tennessee said.

"Maybe we can. That sounds nice." America said, playing a few more notes on the piano and smiling.

"Yeah. What do you normally play?" Tennessee asked.

"Classical shit. That's all I was ever taught." America said.

"Well, I'm going to teach you some good songs to play on the piano. Would you like that, Pa?"

"Yes, ma'am!"

Texas

"Well, Texas, this is it—my home, your new place of residence," America said, smiling and turning to the former republic. Texas gave America a small, sad smile.

"Until I die." He said. America shook his head.

"You ain't dying, Texas," America said.

"Not right now, but I will once I officially become one of your states. Because your states are personified," he said. America smiled.

"Well...that might be a lie," He said, opening the front door to reveal most of his states sitting in the foyer making bets on who would win the fight between Michigan and Ohio.

"They're alive?" Texas asked, sounding astonished.

"All of them are. And you will be, too. Welcome to the United States of America," America said, wrapping his arm around Texas's shoulders and walking him into the house.

"Break up the fight! Texas is here!" America called. That got the attention of his states, as many of them crowded around Texas and began asking him questions.

"Stop crowding him! He's living with us now. You'll have plenty of time to talk to him later!" America said, "Shoo, you rascals!"

"Love you too, Da!" Delaware called before the crowd broke up. Texas turned to America in shock. America smiled at him.

"Welcome to the family!"

Utah

America waved to Utah as the country entered his room. It had been a month since the explosion, but Utah didn't want to leave the room yet. Utah told him he wasn't ready. America thinks he was still trying to accept that he was now deaf.

'How are you feeling?' America signed at him. Utah shrugged. America pulled up a chair in front of him and sat down.

'Do you want to practice signing?' America asked him. Utah shook his head.

'I don't want to, ' he signed before looking away. America leaned forward and tapped his shoulder, drawing his attention back to the country.

'Do you want a hug?' America signed. Utah nodded, and America pulled him into a hug. Utah's tears began to make his shirt wet, but America decided not to comment on it. Utah was going through a tough time, and while America knew he could get through it, it didn't make the journey any less hard for him.

But Utah was a strong person, and America was proud of him. America pulled away from the hug and looked him in the eyes.

'I am proud of you. You are strong. I will help you if you want it. I love you,' America signed. New tears welled up, and Utah pulled America into another hug.

He happily returned it.

Vermont

"Someone wants to see you United." A soldier said, approaching a newly independent America.

"Who is it?" America asked.

"A country. I don't know who, but I don't think he is with the British. He has the same uniform as the Green Mountain Boys." He said. America nodded.

"I'll go talk to him. Thanks for telling me." America said before walking off in the direction the soldier said the country was in. America quickly caught sight of the country, his green flag making him stand out. He also had a dark blue canton that was filled with stars, similar to America's own.

"Hello, sir! Can I help you?" America called over to him. He jumped slightly and nodded, his eyes scanning America's body, his body language revealing nervousness. He was also young, looking about fifteen.

"Bon-Bonjour. My name is the Vermont Republic. I'm a new country formed up north, between New York, New Hampshire, and Quebec." He said. America smiled. Another republic and another country that was declaring independence? That was amazing! Some of the land was America's own, but he was sure they could settle that problem.

"It's nice to meet you," America said, holding out a hand. Instead, Vermont Republic practically tackled him in a hug before pulling back, looking very embarrassed.

"Sorry!" He squeaked out, his hands going to cover his face.

"I'm confused. Why did you hug me?" America asked, not used to strangers doing that.

"Because...some of my land came from yours, I'm your son. I've already met my other father, Quebec, and he told me not to meet you, but I'm an independent country and don't have to listen to what Père says, so I came anyway," Vermont Republic said. America stood there, shocked.

"I have an–a son?" America eventually managed to get out. Vermont Republic nodded, and America quickly pulled him back into the

hug.

"I HAVE A SON!" America yelled. Vermont Republic laughed and looked very happy at that.

"You are okay with me existing?" He asked. America nodded.

"I have a son! Of course, I'm excited you exist! Oh, this is big news. I'll have to write to Congress to see if they can work on officially recognizing you as a nation," America said, pulling away and smiling. Vermont Republic smiled back.

"Merci beaucoup, Papa."

Virginia

"I feel old," NASA said, rubbing his forehead as he examined a set of blueprints.

"You feel old? Ha! You are just a small baby child!" Virginia said, "Ain't that right, Father?"

"Ginny is right. You are a small baby child. I mean, just look at me! I don't even know the day I was born. That's how old I am!" America said. NASA shot them an annoyed look.

"Ha, ha, ha. You guys are hilarious," he said. Virginia smiled widely and continued.

"Why, I'm so old; I've seen the world order change many times," she said.

"I'm so old that democracies were barely a thing when I was born."

"I'm so old that I got to meet all of the colonies in the Americas."

"I'm so old nobody knows what my childhood was like not even me!"

"I'm so old that I knew New Jersey before he was an ass."

"I'm so old; I got to see all these states as children."

"I'm so old I kicked the Holy Roman Empire in the balls," Virginia said, causing America to give her a surprised look. When did she do that?

"I'M SO OLD I WATCHED THE ROMAN EMPIRE DIE!" San Marino yelled from the hallway.

"He wins," NASA said with a smile.

Washington

"You are an embarrassment to my bloodline."

"I am your bloodline."

"You are making a mockery of me and my people."

"Still don't understand how."

"You have been completely insensitive to my culture."

"I literally just said I don't believe in Bigfoot," America said.

"And you will pay for those words," Washington answered.

"Is that why you've dragged me out to the middle of nowhere?" America asked.

"Yes! If you say you don't believe in Bigfoot, I will stay with you in the woods until you see him and believe. That way, you can be my father again," Washington said. America paused at the last sentence.

"YOU'RE DISOWNING ME BECAUSE I DON'T BELIEVE IN BIGFOOT?" America yelled at him. Washington nodded.

"What, no! Washing Machine, why would you do this to me?" America asked, acting more offended than he actually was. In reality, he was just really, really fucking confused.

"Because you refuse to believe that my friend exists, *America*," he said. That... hurt more than expected. America hoped he wasn't being serious.

"Fine, I believe in Bigfoot. Please never call me America again." America said. Washington nodded.

"Sure thing, Dad!"

West Virginia

"Dad? Do you ever regret making me a state?" West Virginia asked her father one day. America shot her a horrified look.

"No, I don't! I don't know why you would think that, but I am happy you exist! You are an amazing person!" America said.

"But I wasn't supposed to exist. I should be another part of Virginia. My economy is not the best, and my people don't always get the best opportunities. It might have been better for everyone if I had stayed as another part of Virginia," she said. America quickly pulled her into a hug.

"Westie, please, please never say that again. I don't care that you don't have the best economy. I don't care if, at one point, your land belonged to Virginia. You are an amazing state all on your own. Sure, you have some problems, but no state is problem-free," America said. West Virginia returned the hug and began crying into his shoulder.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Dad!" She said. America began running his hand through her hair.

"You don't have to apologize. You have done nothing wrong. I love you, Westie, my beautiful daughter. I'm sorry I didn't realize your doubts and try to help you work through them sooner." America said.

"You don't have to apologize, Dad. I should have spoken up sooner. Thank you, and I love you."

"I love you too. Don't forget it."

Wisconsin

"I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DAD!" Wisconsin yelled as she entered the

room.

"What is it?" America asked with a heavy sigh.

"You put the Federal Cheese Caves under Missouri and not me! Why would you betray me in this way? You know I would take much better care of the cheese than Souri ever could!" Wisconsin complained.

"You would eat all of the cheese," America stated.

"I would not!"

"Yes, you would. You can't deny it, Connie," America said.

"Do you not trust me?" Wisconsin asked, soundboard offended.

"Not with storing the Federal Cheese without eating it," America answered. Wisconsin crossed his arms and huffed.

"Fine. I see how it is. I see that I'm unloved. I see that you have betrayed me." Wisconsin said before storming off. America laughed.

"You are being dramatic, Connie! I still love you, my precious badger child."

Wyoming

"This is so exciting! I can't believe this land is finally a National Park! After all these years, the geysers and rainbow pools will be protected!" Wyoming told America after Yellowstone was officially made a national park. America smiled at her excitement.

"I'm excited too. Knowing that more of the wild will be preserved is amazing! And knowing that people will have the same awe as I did, seeing your wonders will be amazing!" He told her. Wyoming beamed at her father and pulled him into a quick hug.

"Thank you for doing this, Dad! Oh, I'm going to have tourists come for this and so many more exciting things." Wyoming said before gasping, "Dad! I should become a park ranger! Then I can work here and watch everyone who comes and goes!"

"That sounds like fun. I'm glad you still want to be involved with nature."

"Are you kidding me, Dad? It's Yellowstone. There is a pool with rainbow water, Dad! This place is magical! I love it here so much! I'm glad it's being preserved because who knows what corporations would want to destroy it to take advantage of it?" Wyoming said, her body practically vibrating with excitement.

America smiled and pulled her into another hug.

"You will have such a fun time working and going here. I'm glad you are excited about the park systems and want to be involved."

"I am, too. Thank you for this, Dad."

"You're welcome."

Puerto Rico

"Papa, can you help me bandage the cut you stitched up? The old ones fell off," Puerto Rico said, limping into the room, sitting in a chair, and holding up the foot with the big cut.

"Of course! Does it feel less painful?" America asked. Puerto Rico gave a so-so-hand signal.

"Kinda? I'm still not sure if it's infected. Can you check?" he said. America sighed.

"I don't know how to do that well Rico." America said, "You know that. You are probably better off seeing a doctor-"

Puerto Rico flinched at the word, and America felt guilt well up at that. It was his fault Puerto Rico met and was treated by that awful, racist motherfucker. America should have realized what was happening and listened to Puerto Rico when he said he thought something was wrong with that doctor.

Why didn't he?

"I...Minnie has some medical training. I'll ask her." Puerto Rico said.

America nodded.

"That seems like a good idea. She might be able to help more than I can." America said as he finished bandaging up the cut. Puerto Rico carefully put his feet on the floor, winching slightly as he did so. America pulled him into a hug and felt the territory melt into it.

"I love you, Puerto Rico. I'm sorry I failed you all those years ago." America said.

"It's okay, Papa. I've forgiven you. It's not your fault. You couldn't have known what he planned to do. You were trying to help my people, and I will never fault you for that."

Northern Mariana Islands

"I hate colds. So, so much." Northern Mariana Islands said as she blew her nose again. America rubbed her back and felt her curl into him more.

"They aren't fun at all. At least you aren't throwing up." America said. She laughed.

"Not yet! But it's not the flu, so I'm not worried about that."

"I'm glad it's not the flu. Remember that one time half the house got it?" America commented, causing her to laugh.

"That was awful. It was funny hearing you tell your government to fuck off, and you basically waiting on everyone to make sure we were all comfortable. And you turned the basement into a giant bed so we could all fall asleep on you! That was my favorite part. We need to bring that back." Northern Mariana Islands rambled.

"That giant bed was amazing. I will definitely think about that. I enjoyed helping all of you kids." America said, kissing Northern Mariana Islands on the forehead.

"Don't kiss me. You might get sick!" She said. America laughed.

"Mari, with the number of sick kids I care for, I'm pretty sure I'm immune to most illnesses. Seriously, I haven't gotten a cold in years,

and with the amount of sleep I get, my immune system should be weak as hell!" America commented.

"That is true. I'm glad you aren't worried about getting sick. Being sick isn't as bad with you here." She said, patting his chest. America smiled.

"Thank you, Mari."

"You're welcome. Now I am going to try to sleep, and you should do the same thing. Hear me?"

"Loud and clear. Sweet dreams, Mari."

"Sweet dreams, Dad."

Guam

"Dad?" Guam asked America hesitantly as she approached him, still decorated in bandages from her injuries.

"Yes, Guam?" America asked. She flinched.

"I think I'm afraid of Tatay now." She said quietly, "I know what he did he didn't want to do, but I can't stop seeing his face as he hurt me, and hurt me. It...he looked like he liked it, and I...I'm scared of him."

"Do you want a hug?" America asked her. Guam nodded, and he pulled her into a hug, trying to make sure he didn't hit her injuries.

"I know he was just a puppet, and he's apologizing, but I can't stop seeing it, and it hurts!" Guam said, sounding like she was holding back tears.

"Do you want Phil to stay away from you for a little bit?" America asked. Guam just squeezed him tighter.

"I don't know! I don't want Tatay to feel more guilty about this than he already does. I know he is blaming himself, but I...I don't think I can be around him for very long," she said.

"I...I don't know how to help. I'm sorry, but if you need anything, let me know, and I'll do my best to offer you whatever help you want. I know that it's probably not that helpful, but—"

"That's...that's helpful, Dad. Thank you for the offer. I think I might have to figure this out alone, but...but I appreciate the offer." Guam said.

"Alright then. Just let me know if you need anything, and don't force yourself to be around Phil if it bothers you."

"Thanks, Dad."

American Samoa

"Hey, Tama? Can I talk to you? It's important." America heard American Samoa ask from behind him. He looked up from his paperwork and nodded.

"Sure you can, kid," America said, noting how he was dressed in a suit and looked like he had brushed his hair. He was trying to suck up to me. Something was up.

"Tama...I..." American Samoa trailed off, looking incredibly nervous.

"Are you okay? Sammy, as long as you aren't hurt, I-"

"I WANT HAWAII TO BE MY TINA!" American Samoa yelled. America froze, shocked.

Tina. That meant mom in Samoan. American Samoa wanted Hawaii to be his mom.

"Why?" America gasped, still shocked and wanting to know what had prompted this. American Samoa must have misunderstood his words because he had teary eyes and looked heartbroken.

"Sorry, sorry. That was a dumb thing to say. I'll-"

"Sammy. I know Hawaii is a good mom. I don't care if you want her to be your mom. I just wanted to know what made you begin thinking of her as your mom." America clarified. American Samoa

looked less upset, and he smiled.

"She acts like you. She is amazing. I just...my mind has always done it. But...but I want to tell her. I just....I wanted to make sure you were okay with it." American Samoa said, shuffling his feet.

"I'm more than okay with it. If you want to grow your family, do it." American Samoa smiled.

"Faafetai." American Samoa muttered, pulling America into a hug.

"You're welcome. Now go talk to your Tina about her having a son." America said. American Samoa laughed.

"Will do, Tama!"

US Virgin Islands

"Sure, your goggles work?" US Virgin Islands asked America.

"Yes, Vee, I am. We tested them on the beach before we got on your boat." America said. His daughter shrugged.

"Just wanted to make sure. Getting salt water in your eye can sting badly." She said.

"Yeah, I know that. It's not a fun feeling. Stinging nettles are way worse, though," America said.

"Aren't those the ones that feel like they are burning?"

"Yes. It is The Worst."

"Sounds fun." US Virgin Islands said with a little laugh.

"Laughing at my pain? The audacity." America said jokingly.

"I'll just take the spark plug out of my boat and fly away then." US Virgin Islands said, making her wings reappear.

"Well, it's only about an hour's swim back to shore, so all that would accomplish is leaving your boat stuck here," America argued.

"Well, then I'd just make you get it back then," she responded, smiling as she put on her goggles and made her wings disappear.

"Sure you will," America muttered.

"I would." She said with a small smile before jumping into the ocean. America rolled his eyes and jumped in after her.

Unorganized Territory

"Dad, what do hugs feel like?" Unorganized Territory asked America one day. He paused, unsure of how to answer.

"Well...they feel warm...and nice. They make you feel safe when they come from someone older than you."

"What does warmth feel like?"

"Can't you feel things there? When the other states were there? Haven't you felt things when you were fronting?" America asked her the questions concerning him.

"I don't have a sense of touch. I can hear, see, and talk. But I can't smell, feel, or taste. All of my experiences with that are through your memories, in here, that is. And I always have trouble remembering what things feel like when I'm in charge of the body," Unorganized Territory said.

"Oh," America said plainly. That must be awful for Unorganized Territory and everyone else. America just wanted to hang out with his child together, figure out what foods are her favorites and make them for her, and get to pull her into hugs...and do so much with her.

'That sounds wonderful, Dad. I wish I could do that too, ' Unorganized Territory said. *' But being here isn't so bad. I'm not completely alone.'*

America began crying at that, knowing that even if Unorganized Territory weren't alone, she would never get to be a part of this family fully until she had a body.

"Don't cry, Dad. I've been watching for over two hundred years. I'm used

to it."

"You shouldn't be. I swear, Myra, I will get you a body, even if it's the last thing I do."

NASA

America tightened his grip on NASA as the organization continued to cry, distraught over Opportunity's 'death.'

"She was so amazing, and she did so much, and I couldn't help her, and her last words...and..." NASA rambled through his sobs. America patted his back.

"It's okay, NASA." he said, "It's alright. You did everything you could."

"I should have done more! I should have figured out a way to avoid that storm or...or...I miss Oppy." NASA said, pulling away and wrapping his wings around himself.

"I do, too. She was a stubborn little rover. It lasted way longer than anyone expected," America said. NASA let out a teary laugh.

"Yeah, she did. Oppy got your stubbornness." He said.

"She got yours too. And your love of knowledge." NASA nodded before sighing.

"It's three am, and I'm in your room crying over a robot. Why am I like this?" He said.

"It's not just a robot—not to you, not to many people. I mean, have you seen how everyone is reacting to Oppy's death? They miss her too," America said, trying to reassure his son that it was okay to get emotionally attached to his robots and cry over their deaths and that it was okay to call his rovers his children.

"Thanks, Papa," NASA said, hugging America again.

"You're welcome, little star."

Hawaii and the Celtic Nations

Hawaii was very excited for today. Ireland was finally going to introduce Hawaii to the other Celtic Nations, his family. He was very excited when he and one of his human children picked Hawaii up from the airport and spent the entire car ride talking about his family.

"Seanmháthair will spoil you rotten iníon. She loves kids and has been so excited to meet you ever since I told you about our...friendship." Ireland said.

"I'm so excited to meet all of the Celtic Nations. This will be an amazing week if they are as wonderful as you!" Hawaii said. Ireland smiled widely as he parked the car.

"I'm glad you're excited," he said as they exited the car. Ireland walked around the back of the house, revealing eight people, three of whom Hawii recognized.

Wales elbowed a girl with a black-and-white flag and whispered something to her, causing her to laugh. Isle of Man stood by her father, Scotland, and smiled and waved at Hawaii.

"Aloha," Hawaii said, slightly nervous.

"I know you've met some of us, but my brother wants to reintroduce us so you know how we are related," Scotland said. Hawaii nodded, and Ireland beamed before pointing out everyone.

"So, Hawaii, these are my fellow Celtic nations. These are my deartháreacha. You've met Alba or Scotland...And Tuaisceart Éireann, who you haven't met. He's Northern Ireland." Ireland explained.

"Isn't Northern Ireland your so—" Hawaii asked before being cut off by Ireland.

"That's complicated and something I don't want to talk about. Anyway, moving on, we have my iníon dearthár, Ellan Vannin, Isle of Man, whom you have met."

"She has the best name for a woman," Hawaii said, smiling. Isle of Man laughed.

"Indeed I do. Now, let your ayr finish talking." She said. Ayr? What did that mean? Was it friend? It must be, as that's what Ireland was to her. Hawaii was pulled out of her thoughts by Ireland continuing his introductions.

"That's Breizh, Brittany. She is my deirfiúr. She is in France and is terrifyingly badass, just like you iníon. You'll get along well. Next to her are our two adoptive siblings, the Hispanic-Celtics from Spain, Asturies, Asturias in English, and Galicia." Ireland finished before turning to the last country, which had a black flag with a white plus.

"She's my seanmháthair, Kernow. In reality, she's only Breizh's grandmother, but Seanmháthair has adopted all of us Celtics as her grandchildren—except Cymru, Wales, who is her nephew." Ireland finished with a smile.

"Your family is complicated," Hawaii commented, knowing her family wasn't any better. Cornwall laughed.

"Most countries have them. It makes things fun." She said, laughing. She reminded Hawaii of many of her Polynesian relatives, short, old, and giving off those 'I know a lot of shit, and I love kids' vibe.' It's the same one Ireland gave off. Hawaii liked that.

"You say fun. I say annoying." Brittany said. Cornwall smiled.

"Well, at least we can always count on Cymru, Tuaisceart Éireann, and Éire to make this family more complicated." She said. All three of the countries blushed a dark red at that, Northern Ireland's flag changing from the saltire Ireland once had to a white one with a blue plant on it.

Wales exclaimed something in Welsh, and Northern Ireland said

something else in Irish. Ireland was silent, arms crossed and face burning. Cornwall laughed.

"Oh, you three are so easy to tease." She said.

"Seanmháthair, why must you do this to me," Ireland said.

"Because you love adopting people as your children," Cornwall said, smiling in Hawaii's direction.

"What? Why are you looking at me like that?" Hawaii asked. The Celtic Nations giggled, and Ireland turned an even deeper red.

"They are just being annoying little dicks." Ireland said, shooting them a glare.

"Oh, come on Éire. It's our job as your family!" Galicia said with a smile.

"Yeah, exactly! Why do you think I blackmail you so much?" Wales said, "It's how I show my love for my family!"

"You are so annoying about that," Brittany said.

"You're just embarrassed that I know about that thing from 1390," Wales said.

"And I still don't know how you do!" Brittany said. Hawaii laughed.

"Uncle Wales, do you have any blackmail on me?" she asked, curious.

"Banana leaf." He said. Hawaii paled, and Wales smiled that same fanged grin he had during Paulet. Hawaii noticed the other Celtic Nations looked shocked, but a happy kind of shocked, and Northern Ireland whispered something in Irish to Ireland.

"Why don't we head inside?" Scotland suggested, "Before the rain starts."

"I agree. Hawaii, I've set up a room in my house for you. The other Celtics will stay in a hotel during the trip," Ireland said. Hawaii

smiled. Ireland was always the most thoughtful person when it came to guests.

"Thank you, Uncle Ireland," Hawaii said. Isle of Man slapped a hand to her forehead.

"Éire, you didn't say she was as dense as you!" Asturias grinned. Ireland groaned again.

"What? What's the matter?" Hawaii asked. Ireland wrapped his arm around her shoulder.

"It's nothing. They are just trying to make fun of me. You might get some heat for that," Ireland said. Hawaii nodded.

"That's alright." Hawaii said, leaning into the hug, "It's nice to see another family that loves each other."

Sucessor

It had finally happened. The communist government was gone, and Poland was no longer controlled by the Soviet Union. Most importantly, his father could come home.

After so long, his father, the Polish Government-in-Exile, the Republic of Poland, was finally home.

Poland finally got to see him again without having to be secretive about it or hide the fact that they were talking.

It was an amazing feeling.

"What should I do now?" Poland asked his father, who smiled at him.

"What do you think is best for your people?" he answered. Poland shook his head, not meaning to get an answer like that.

"No-Ojciec-what should I do...I..." Poland tried to explain what he meant. What should he do now that he was going to die, die to let the real Poland take his place?

"Polska, you are completely free now. You don't have to ask for my permission to do things. You can do what you think is best." Poland was so frustrated by his father's lack of understanding. Poland needed to be told what to do so he didn't mess anything up for his father when he returned to his proper place as Poland.

"But...now that the communist government is gone, you'll be coming back to take your rightful place as Poland and I-" Poland was cut off by his father as he began speaking.

"I'm not Poland anymore," His father said, causing Poland to jerk his head up in shock. Words spilled out of his mouth without much thought.

"But—but you have to be! You were Poland before Soviet Union and

Third Reich took over and ruined everything. I was just born to be Soviet Union's puppet, his toy. I didn't even know how to speak on my own. I wasn't meant to be a person or a personification of an independent country. That was supposed to be you and—" Poland was cut off by his father pulling him into a hug.

"I was Poland. But now I am passing that mantle onto you," he whispered. Poland began crying softly and gripped his father tightly.

"But I don't—" Poland began before his father cut him off.

"Don't you dare say you don't deserve this, Polska. You do—more than anyone. You deserve to live without being under the control of others. I got that chance. Now I want you to have it," His father said, causing Poland's tears to come faster and harder.

"But what if I fault your people because I'm too much of a mindless follo—"

"Polska, you are many things, but a mindless follower is not one of them," His father said. Poland nodded hesitantly before burying his face in his father's shoulder.

"Not anymore. But I..." Poland started, unable to express his feelings.

"The circumstances of your birth don't define you now, okay Polska? You are far more than a puppet or a satellite." His father said, his fingers starting to trace shapes on Poland's back, right between his wings.

Poland relaxed at that, the motions calming him.

"But...Ojciec, I don't know how to be a person. All my life, I've been someone whose strings have been pulled by others and...I don't know if I even understand how to remove the strings and move, live completely on my own, with my own free will." Poland said, his eyes closing.

Poland was so tired. Maybe this was because he was going to die soon, finally be free of the pain and suffering of life, leaving behind

his father, the countryhuman that the Polish people deserved.

"You will do wonderfully, Polska. You are strong, and I know you can get through this," his father said. Poland thought he was squeezing his father as hard as he could, but he was still not ready to leave him, not after the short time they had together.

"You have so much faith..." Poland muttered, his eyes opening.

"And none of it is misplaced." He said.

"You have so much faith...." Poland muttered again, his voice tired.

"Let's talk about this tomorrow, Polska. It's getting late." Poland's body went limp in his father's arms, and he nodded.

"Okay, Ojciec. We can talk about this tomorrow." Poland muttered. He felt his father press a kiss on his forehead, and he smiled.

"Polska, I need you to move as well," Ojciec said, his voice amused. Poland groaned and reluctantly pulled away before walking to the bed and pulling off the covers. He kicked off his shoes and went to lie down, his father following his example.

"Good night, Ojciec," Poland muttered. He felt his father pull him into a hug.

"Good night, Polska. I love you," he said, his heartbeat lulling Poland to sleep. Poland returned the hug, wrapped his body around his father's, closed his eyes, and swiftly drifted off into sleep.

But unbeknownst to Poland, that night, the Government-in-Exile wakes up in extreme pain.

Unbeknownst to Poland, the Government-in-Exile kisses his forehead as a way to say goodbye.

Unbeknownst to Poland, the Government-in-Exile whispered one final goodbye.

And then the Government-in-Exile exhaled for the very last time.

And Poland woke up with his arms full of ash.

The Sign

Bavaria slammed her fist against the door, trying to get America to open up.

"AME! OPEN UP THIS DOOR RIGHT NOW!" Bavaria yelled, going to bang it again before it opened, revealing Wyoming.

"Hello, Miss Bavaria. Dad's coming down now." She said. Bavaria sighed in relief.

"Good, good," Bavaria muttered.

"Why do you need Dad so badly?" Wyoming asked.

"I need to have a talk with him about our son's behavior. Deutschland refuses to listen to me, so I hope he'll listen to his father." Bavaria explained. Wyoming nodded.

"Boys should listen to their mothers more. Because even if he listens to Dad, everyone knows that Dad is scared of you ever since you kicked his ass that one time, so now Dad will just tell Jeremy anything you say."

"That's what I'm hoping for, Wy," Bavaria told the state, who smiled.

"*Bayern*, I don't know what time it is for you in your country, but it's considered rude to start banging on people's doors at two am," America said, walking to the door. Bavaria snorted.

"Please, like you were actually sleeping. Now, I need you to come talk some sense into your son." Bavaria said.

"Which one?" America asked, a small smile tugging at his lips. Bavaria gave him a blank stare, and his smile widened, "What? It's a valid question. Do you know how many sons I have?"

"I meant our son, and you know that, you idiot," Bavaria said. America shrugged.

"Maybe I did, maybe I didn't. But that's not the point here. Come in, and we can talk about things." America said as Wyoming opened the door fully.

"I'll let you adults talk. I have a bed that's calling my name." Wyoming said before walking off.

"See, that's where I should be—in bed," America said, pointing at Wyoming. Bavaria rolled his eyes.

"Please, everyone knows you don't sleep," Bavaria answered.

"Maybe I'm trying something new," America said as they entered his parlor. Then Bavaria spotted something that made her want to beat America's stupid ass again.

"YOU HAVE THAT SIGN UP TOO?"

"IT WAS FUNNY PLEASE DON'T HURT ME!" America said, backing away with his hands raised.

"AMERICA!" Bavaria said, throwing her hands in the air in exasperation.

"Bavaria!" He yelled back.

"What? Why on earth would you go along with this?" Bavaria asked.

"I'm being a supportive father!" America insisted.

"I am going to beat your ass, Ame!" Bavaria told him. America laughed nervously.

"Sorry?"

Finland's Wings [Non-Canon]

"The time has come, Finland. You will finally be getting your official coat of arms." Russian Empire said, placing his hand on Finland's shoulder.

"Will I get to have wings like yours? To show how I am your son?" Finland asked. Russian Empire smiled.

"Yes," Russian Empire said, taking Finland into a room with the new coat of arms. Finland's tail waved around in excitement, but after his father looked at it, he grabbed it and held it close to his chest, stopping it from waving around.

"Good boy. You are doing such a good job correcting those wrongful behaviors." Russian Empire said. Finland smiled widely at that. Russian Empire then picked up a pen and lightly tapped Finland on the nose, smiling softly.

"Now, are you ready for your new coat of arms?" He asked. Finland nodded eagerly.

Russian Empire then moved to sign the law that made it official, and the effects on Finland were instantaneous. The small, physically six child swayed and collapsed as the new limps began to push their way out of his body.

Finland's mind was foggy and drifty, which he assumed must have been a side effect of the new coat of arms. He couldn't form coherent thoughts. All he wanted was sleep. He felt himself lifted by his father, presumably, his limp body not resisting.

Finland still felt very happy despite the newfound exhaustion that had settled into his limbs. He finally has his new coat of arms, which his father wanted him to have. He finally felt like an official part of his family. Without realizing it, Finland let out a tiny, happy meow.

The result was instantaneous. Finland was thrown to the ground, his father's face twisting to absolute fury and disappointment. It scared Finland.

"BAD! You will not make those cursed noises in my home. You understand Finland?" Russian Empire said, throwing his son to the ground. Finland nodded quickly, clamping his lips shut. Russian Empire smiled again.

"Good boy," he responded. Finland smiled, happy he could stop his father's disappointment.

The arms picked him back up, and Finland quickly nuzzled back into the warmth, his eyes slipping shut. Being there, held in his father's warm grip, made him feel so relaxed. His face pressed against his father's massive chest. He listened to his father's steady breaths.

A door opened, and Finland felt himself being lowered towards a bed. Reluctantly, he released his grip on his father and allowed himself to be placed down on the bed. His father's hands rubbed the base of his ears, sending another wave of relaxation through his body as he fought back the lion noises his body attempted to make.

But he was so tired that it was getting hard to hold them back. He didn't want to disappoint his father again!

"Sleep deeply, my son. Everything will feel better in the morning," Russian Empire said as Finland's consciousness slowly slipped away. The events of the day and the steady pets of his ears dragged the now griffin child to sleep.

Russian Empire's Thoughts on Alaska

This child was pathetic. Russian Empire can't believe Russian America was supposed to be his son. Thankfully, Russian America was easily manipulated and trained. It was easy to train him to blame himself for everything, and he had even begun to do it without Russian Empire prompting him to. It was beautiful watching him run around doing whatever Russian Empire asked so he would be praised. It was like having a dog—obedient, loyal, and completely and irreversibly his.

Of course, there were times when he messed up, but those were always quickly fixed. He never fought back, and even if he had the tiniest thought that Russian Empire was evil, the thought was swiftly crushed. He adored Russian Empire and his wonderful and caring father, which meant this was working, and Russian Empire's investment was appropriately utilized.

It was so easy to make him do anything. A few words and some physical affection, and he would do anything Russian Empire asked, no matter the request. Keeping touch from Russian America was the most effective. He would do anything to be able to hug Russian Empire.

Russian Empire loved this control. His little pet treated him like the god he was. Russian Empire loved his little follower, his servant. If only his brother could be the same way.

But still, that would come in time.

Until they, one pet would do.

The Birth of the Empire

Requested by NewLostIslands . Lloegr is England, and Cymru is Wales.

"After everything, I can't believe this is how you want me to go. Don't you want to kill me in battle to show your strength, or are you just going to keep taking the coward's way out?" Cymru mocked as he followed Lloegr to the office where Lloegr would make the law officially removing Cymru's principality.

Any reasonable personification would be scared, as that law wasn't just a law, but their death warrant. However, Cymru refused to show fear in front of Lloegr. He knew Lloegr liked control and refused to give it to him.

Besides, his Aunt Cernyw (she wasn't really his aunt, more of a distant cousin, but she had always insisted Cymru call her his aunt) had survived her government being taken away and still existed as the personification of Cornwall, much to Lloegr's dismay. Cymru was just hoping that the same miracle that saved her would save him.

"It is not the coward's way out. It is me taking care of business. If you die in the process, it's a shame but not something I'll cry over. You served your use while it lasted, and that's all I could have asked." Lloegr said, his tone dismissive and demeaning. Cymru bit down a growl, hands curling until his claws touched his palms.

Lloegr was the most infuriating person Cymru had ever had the displeasure of meeting.

"Claim that all you want," Cymru began, hoping to at least get the last word in, just in case he died, "But you never killed me during Glyndŵr, and after I became a *draig* and cut off those fingers, you never tried fighting me directly. You're a coward who'll do anything to feel—"

Cymru was cut off when Lloegr turned around and slammed him into the wall, pressing Cymru's wings uncomfortably against his back.

"I am not a *coward*." Lloegr hissed, ears pulled back against his skull. Cymru narrowed his eyes, feeling fire build up in his throat as he bared his teeth. Lloegr pulled away, glaring at Cymru, "Why can't you just die peacefully like your father did?"

It took everything Cymru had not to attack Lloegr for that comment. Even though Cymru had never met his father, and his father had died peacefully, in order to give Cymru life, Lloegr was using his father as a weapon against Cymru was unforgivable.

"I'm not my father. You should know that more than anyone." Cymru growled. Lloegr scoffed before turning and walking back to his office.

God, please do not let me die at Lloegr's hands. I would rather die any other way than at his whim. Cymru prayed as he entered Lloegr's office, leaning against the doorframe, wings curled around him slightly as if to shield him from the older countryhuman.

"I figured you would want to die in your own lands," Lloegr commented as he prepared to sign the document. Cymru scoffed.

"I want to make you live with his Lloegr," Cymru said, "Besides, Aunt Cernyw never died when you tried to kill her, so I remain hopeful that you won't be able to get rid of me this way."

"Cornwall was a mistake. I made her a county. You won't be anything, so you will die." Lloegr said before signing the bill.

The effect was immediate. Cymru collapsed in on himself, weakness seeping into views and forcing him to his knees. Was he dying? Was he wrong? Cymru looked up through blurry vision and saw Lloegr double over as if being drained of his strength like Cymru.

What was happening to them?

What had Lloegr done?

But despite all that, it felt freeing, like some sort of chain was being taken off his soul and freeing it. Cymru felt weaker, yes, but also free. Human almost.

Most importantly, he was alive.

The weakness was fading now as a different kind of strength was settling into his limbs, as well as a strange presence in his soul, gently whispering for Cymru to look forward.

"What happened?" Cymru heard Lloegr demand.

"You signed the bill. Whatever happe—" Cymru stopped as he finally made eye contact with the thing his soul was telling him to look at. As he did, the presence vanished, leaving Cymru staring at a child with Lloegr's flag, "Lloegr?"

"Would it kill you to use my pro—what is that?" Lloegr demanded.

"It's a child *England*." Cymru spat, "A country child with your flag."

"That weakness..." Lloegr began, trailing off. Cymru began laughing as he realized what Lloegr had done.

"Oh, you *twlsyn,*" Cymru laughed, "You didn't just strip me of nationhood. You stripped yourself. That kid is your replacement!"

"Impossible. If the kid were my replacement, I would be dead. I'm very clearly alive." Lloegr pointed out. Cymru's laughter slowed.

"Yeah, so he can't be England, can he?" Cymru asked before another thing came to him, "And I felt a connection with him, which would mean...oh god, Lloegr, you bastard, what did you do?"

"You felt a connection? Then what is it supposed to represent? It's not me, it's not you, but—"

"You took nationhood from both of us. I watched it drain from you, too. The kid's ours, as horrific as it is, but...neither of us are nations. We're faux countries, the people countries now. This kid could be—"

"This kid personifies nothing. It is nothing, and I am still a

countryhuman. You might have been drained of your nationhood, but I have not." Lloegr said, standing up and approaching the child.

"Papa?" The child asked, his bright green eyes (so much like Cymru's own) full of a curious wonder. Lloegr smiled, and with one quick flick of his wrist, his claws cut bloody stripes into the kid's face. The kid screamed, hands reaching up to grab at his face, blood running down.

"Lloegr, what are you doing?" Cymru asked. Lloegr laughed.

"Ensuring that I remain England and remain alive. Besides, do you want a kid with me?" Lloegr asked. Cymru sighed but shrugged.

"You have a point, but why must you make it painful? Finish it off quickly and let it go to heaven. Don't torture it." Cymru said, grabbing the child as it tried to run away.

"Papa! Tad!" The child sobbed, blood mixing with tears, "Please, please, no. Os gwelwch yn dda. Os gwelwch yn dda! Tad, os gwelwch yn dda! Please!"

Cymru felt a surge of pity and briefly entertained the idea of letting the child go before sighing. Lloegr would ensure the child died eventually. It is better to ensure he passes quickly rather than spend the rest of his life being hunted by Lloegr. It was cruel, but it was mercy.

"Mae'n ddrwg gen i," Cymru said, closing his eyes before he felt the child go limp. Cymru opened his eyes and sighed.

"Well, that's that taken care of," Lloegr said, but his eyes betrayed nervousness.

"You haven't gotten it back, have you? You're stil—"

"I am not, and if you value your second chance, you'll shut up about it." Lloegr snapped, cutting off Cymru, who dropped the child's body.

"Llo-England, you know what this means. You aren't an idiot,"

Cymru said. Lloegr narrowed his eyes, and Cymru stepped back, bracing himself. Before Lloegr could do anything, however, they were cut off by a child's voice.

"Hello?" Cymru turned and saw another child standing there, looking so much like the first. Lloegr's flag, but his eyes were different this time, brown instead of Cymru's green.

"You know what this means," Cymru said, turning back to Lloegr. Lloegr swallowed fear in his eyes.

"Get rid of the first one's body. I'll take care of this one." Lloegr said.

"You aren't going to kill him too. More will follow." Cymru protested.

"Kill?" The child said, eyes full of fear.

"I won't kill him. Take care of the body, Wales. I'll take care of the rest." Lloegr said. With a heavy sigh, Cymru picked up the body and exited the room, soul heavy and body weak.

Mae'n ddrwg gen i

Southern Neighbors

Texas and Arkansas hanging out, requested by ItsArKanSaw

"Why did I let you talk me into this?" Arkansas asked Texas, who smiled.

"Because it's an excellent idea!" He answered. Arkansas rolled his eyes.

"Tex, I can think of four different ways Dee would kill us for this."

"She'll understand! I mean, come on, Arky. He's adorable!" Texas said. Arkansas sighed.

"It's a coyote, Texy. We can't bring it into the house or keep it as a pet," he said, crossing his arms.

"I wasn't going to keep it as a pet. Just take care of it until it gets better." Texas insisted, pointing to the injury on the coyote. Arkansas snorted.

"Please, Texy-Mexy, we've done this song and dance before. You always, *always* get attached," Arkansas said as Texas remained silent. "Don't try to argue with me either. We both know I'm right."

"Well, I think that is an unfounded accusation and slander of my character," Texas argued. Arkansas rolled his eyes.

"Texas, I have a list. You can't argue this and win." Texas scoffed.

"Well I'd like to see this list of yours since you are so confident about it. What's it got, like one incident?"

"Try forty-six. You really have been doing this for quite some time," Arkansas said, pulling out his phone. Texas looked shocked by the number before his face changed.

"Please, Arkie, are you really going to lie about that? That's such a

petty ass thing to do." Texas said.

"I have dates. If you really think I'm lying, then how about I jog your memory with this list?"

"How about you don't?"

"Yeah, I'm taking that as a yes," Arkansas said before he went to read the dates off his phone, as Texas tried to stop him.

"That one time in 1873, with the calf. Those other times with a calf in 1891, 1903, 1952, 1961, 1987, and 2005. That's just the calves. Shall I continue?" Arkansas asked, raising an eyebrow.

"No, no, I get it. But Charlie will be different!" Texas said. Arkansas groaned.

"You've named it? Good Lord Texas, how are you already attached?" Texas smiled sheepishly.

"Will you help me now?" Arkansas groaned again.

"Fine, I'll help," Arkansas said, giving in. Texas smiled widely and pulled Arkansas into a hug, and Arkansas laughed.

"Alright, Little Bro, where do we start in convincing Dee to let you do this?"

Impermanently

The first time a state died impermanently, requested by NewLostIslands

It hurt so much.

A burning, piercing pain that seemed to penetrate New York's very being, draining him of all his strength, strength which seemed to bleed out of him.

New York heard people screaming and yelling, their voices so faint and distant. Everything seemed so far away.

"New York!" he heard his Pap's voice say, his voice sounding miles away and so, so muffled.

New York tried to respond, but when he did, he felt liquid—blood—bubble up from his throat and come out instead. He felt his pap's hands press down on his stomach.

New York opened his eyes, not realizing that they had closed. He saw Pap's lips moving, but his voice was gone.

What was happening?

His head tipped forward, and blood began spilling out of his lips. His vision was getting fuzzy and black, the pain being replaced by a numbness that started to consume his entire body. Everything was getting so dark like the night was falling.

Was it?

Was night falling?

But why did everything feel so weird?

Maybe New York should just sleep. Everything should be better when he wakes up.

Who was screaming?

Pap?

Was that you?

Don't worry. He's just going to take a short nap, Pap.

America's Childhood

Reminder, America is know as Virginia, New World, or Jamestown at this time.

Jamestown's head felt so weird. Lord De La Warr had put the town under martial law, and ever since then, he's felt empty, like something that used to be a part of him had left. Maybe...a flash of pain went through his head, and his thoughts scattered as the pounding headache returned.

Jamestown stumbled, subconsciously bringing himself back to England's house. He needed to be with the Union, with England. Something was calling him towards them, like a siren's song, completely irresistible. It felt like he was in a dream. Everything was getting so fuzzy...

It was like when Jamestown left his family and came to his new land.

Did that mean Roanoke was a dream? Was his family a dream?

"Of course not. If it were, you wouldn't be alive." Virginia said. Jamestown nodded. She was right. Roanoke wasn't fake, but—

The thoughts were quickly scattered again by another sharp burst of pain as Jamestown approached England, who smiled.

"Hello, Jamestown." He said, walking over to Jamestown and placing his hand on Jamestown's head, the headache quickly fading as he did so. Jamestown relaxed very quickly after that, nearly collapsing into England's arms. England moved to hold Jamestown as he was enveloped in a warm hug.

"Hello, England," Jamestown said, burying his face into England's chest and feeling England's tail wrap around him.

It was good to see him again.

"Let's sit down," England said as Jamestown walked with him, closely pressed to his side. As soon as they sat down, Jamestown made sure the hug continued.

England made him feel so warm and safe.

"You are tired, aren't you?" England asked. Jamestown felt himself nod as a wave of exhaustion hit his.

Jamestown was so, so tired.

"You want to stay here and sleep on me, right?" England asked. Jamestown nodded again, gripping him tight. England was such a comfortable place to sleep.

Jamestown wanted to sleep on him. He was so tired.

England knew what was best. He always did.

Jamestown closed his eyes and buried his face into some of England's fur before sighing. This was such a comfortable place to be.

Jamestown was warm. Jamestown was safe. Jamestown was so, so tired.

———

Jamestown woke up to his hair being played with. Jamestown opened his eyes, not liking that someone was doing that. He hated when people touched his hair without his permission. England paused what he was doing and gave Jamestown a stern look.

"Why is your hair braided like a natural?" He asked harshly.

Because they raised me, I was Roanoke. Jamestown wanted to say. But another flash of pain stopped him, and he slumped in England's grip. England resumed playing with Jamestown's hair.

"You don't like braiding your hair like a natural. You prefer to look like an Englishman. So, who forced you to braid it?" England asked.

He was right. Jamestown hated his hair like this. He only wore it this way because of the naturals. It wasn't because England asked or because he wanted to appear English, two things that Jamestown should always strive to be and do. He was an English colony. He needed to make sure he looked like one.

Jamestown quickly started undoing the remainder of the braid and smiled proudly at England once he finished. England smiled.

"I'm so sorry I couldn't help you while you starved before, but at least now I can help ensure you are a sophisticated, wonderful young man," England said, cupping Jamestown's face. Jamestown leaned into it and smiled.

"Thank you, England," He said, happy to have him help England become English. However, Jamestown felt some regret.

What about-

Jamestown gasped in pain as the headache returned with vicious force, his eyes closing as he did so. England removed his hand quickly.

"Are you okay?" England asked, his voice concerned. Jamestown shook his head. "Tell me what happened."

The words spilled out before Jamestown could even think, "I have a headache whenever I think about how it was living with the naturals."

"You actually lived with the naturals? Why? You know they only want to hurt you. Stop thinking about the time you spent with them. Don't think of them at all," England ordered. Jamestown nodded, and the headache faded. His thoughts drifted elsewhere, and his mind became fuzzy.

"Why are you listening to him? You cannot forget your childhood!" Virginia said.

"But England is in charge. He knows what's best." Jamestown responded, hoping that that would help Virginia understand.

"Who are you talking to?" England asked, looking horrified.

"The voice in my head. She's nice. We call her Virginia. Would you like to ta—" England's hand cupping Jamestown's face again cut him off, only this time England's hand prevented him from speaking or even opening his mouth.

"Virginia. You don't hear voices. That would mean you are insane, and I don't want to lock you up for it. Don't even talk to any voices like that ever again. Pretend they are just your own thoughts if you must. But if I hear you talking to yourself again, I will be forced to kill you." England said.

Jamestown froze in terror, and England's face changed to one of concern. He moved his hand from Jamestown's jaw and cheek to his head, where England began running his hand through Jamestown's hair as England pulled him into a hug.

"I don't want to hurt you. But...my government...an insane colony wouldn't be good for them. They would make me kill you if they found out. Just think of any voices and thoughts in your head, and you'll be fine and safe." England said, pulling away from the hug, smiling softly.

"No! You aren't insane! I'm—" Jamestown pushed the voice aside, doing his best to ignore Virginia—his thoughts.

"You promise I won't die?" Jamestown asked.

"So long as you stay loyal, listen to me, obey your governor and the church, and not think about or talk to yourself. After all, why would you talk to your own thoughts?" England said. Jamestown nodded.

"Okay. I'll remember to do that." Jamestown said. England smiled.

"Good. Now run along to your land. I have work to do." England said. Jamestown nodded and scrambled off him, smiling before returning to his home.

'Am I really just your thoughts? Do I not exist as a person?' The fe-Jamestown's thoughts wondered.

Of course, you are my thoughts. I'm not insane. I am sane. I don't have a voice in my head, Jamestown reassured himself. England was right. He couldn't let himself seem insane because he had thoughts. Talking to himself was terrible, and he would have to work hard to break that habit.

He would need to make England proud so he could be the English colony England wanted him to be.

'What about your natural family?'

The headache returned, and Jamestown groaned. He hated them so much, and they made it hard to think about how he had lived before returning.

Did that mean Jamestown was doing something wrong? Was he living the wrong way?

'You can't just mindlessly follow him. He's—' His thoughts cut off and quieted.

'England is right. He's always right, ' his thoughts echoed. Jamestown smiled, the headache fading. He was so happy. The pain was going away, and England said he would help Jamestown improve. He would be a perfect English colony.

Jamestown could get rid of the natural's influence on himself. It was terrible for him. England said they wanted Jamestown dead.

So, Jamestown had to get himself away from them.

Jamestown shouldn't be reliant on the naturals. He just needed England. He was all Jamestown needed, and he was the person Jamestown needed to be dependent on.

He was the country. He knew best.

The Boy and The Charter

I smiled at Roanoke as he beamed up at me, eyes alight with joy. He was so different from the weak, starving boy we took in. I was glad we did. He adapted to living here quickly and was now trying to be friends with everyone in the nation. Although he always reassured me, I would be his best friend.

"What do you wa—" Roanoke's voice suddenly cut off, and his eyes and face went blank. His limbs went slack, and his mouth gaped open. He was swaying slightly, making me fear he would collapse.

"Roan?" I asked, concerned, placing a hand on his shoulder. He didn't react and just stood there blankly. Was he going to die? Was this his end?

"Roanoke?" I asked again, more concerned now, shaking the small boy, hoping to break him out of whatever trance he was in. Roanoke then began to move, and I felt myself relax slightly. He wasn't going to die. For now, at least.

"Roan, what was that?" I asked, wanting to know if it was a sign of his imminent death. But his face remained blank, and he started walking towards the ocean. I followed him, scared and concerned as to what was going on.

I was walking faster than him, while Roanoke's pace was steady and slow. After a short walk, we arrived at the ocean, with me still ahead of Roanoke.

"Why here?" I wondered, turning to see Roanoke walk out of the woods. Much to my surprise, the boy didn't stop. He kept walking towards the sea, and once he reached it, he continued his walk into the water, not even trying to prepare to swim.

It was like he couldn't think and was just being pulled in this direction by something. But what was it? Who did this?

By this point, I knew he wouldn't stop, so I quickly entered the thankfully still shallow water, scooped him up, and pulled him out of the water as his body continued trying to walk in the direction he had been heading.

"What is writing with you?" I asked, carrying the small child away from the water. Roanoke continued to try to escape my grip. I held him close, wishing he would calm down and return to himself. I sat down and waited for him to be still. After a few minutes, he did.

"Yapam?" I questioned, wondering if he was back or if he had died in my arms. I felt him move, graining slightly. I let out a sigh of relief.

"Where are we?" He asked, looking at the sea behind us before focusing on my face. My heart sank, and fear ran through my body.

"You don't remember?" I asked, trying but failing to keep the fear out of my voice. Roanoke picked up on the fear and began to look scared himself.

"Remember what? What happened?" He asked, his voice full of fear as he squirmed in my grip. I let him go, and he backed off, fear in his dark brown eyes.

"You went into some sort of trance and started walking towards the sea. You looked like you were trying to go somewhere like you knew where you needed to be, like you were being called somewhere. It was scary." I told him. Roanoke looked terrified and put his hand over his heart.

"Oh. Oh. I don't like that." He said, looking more scared, shaking slightly. I pulled him into a hug.

"I'm sorry," I told him, unsure what to say. Roanoke gripped me tightly and began crying, loud sobs that broke my heart.

I love this kid. I loved him so, so much.

Why did the world seem to want him dead?

The Burn Recovery

This is Alaska's POV of the burn incident from ApeculiarChild2's newest chapter of her book Born of Fire, Burning Bridges.

Alaska breathed heavily as he stumbled through the halls, looking for his dad, looking for Washington, looking for anyone to help him. The burn throbbed, the pain growing as his vision blurred with tears. Alaska could feel his body try and collapse, give out on him.

There was so much pain it was hard to think about anything else.

"Alaska?" Alaska heard his dad's confused voice say, prompting him to turn his head towards Папа slowly. His dad's face was alright with horror, shock, and fear.

"Папа ..." Alaska muttered as his body swayed. His dad quickly ran over, his warm arms wrapping around Alaska as he collapsed. His dad's fingers brushed against the burn, and Alaska screamed.

"MINNIE!" His dad yelled as Alaska's vision darkened, the pain overwhelming him. His body felt so heavy, and his arm hurt. Alaska moved his head limply to the side and puked, tears mixing with the bile that was dripping out of his mouth.

Alaska felt his dad brush the hair off his forehead, muttering words his brain couldn't decipher. But even then, Alaska could still tell they were full of love. Alaska moved his head to bury it into his dad's chest, and his dad let him, even though there was vomit on Alaska's face.

Alaska felt someone grab the injured arm, and he groaned, trying to hold back another scream. His dad moved him so his face was slightly freed, and Alaska could see Minnesota holding onto his arm. She smiled apologetically at Alaska before muttering something to their dad, who nodded before he kissed Alaska's forehead.

"Wh...pened?" he asked, the words beginning to make sense again, as did the pain from the contact lesson.

"Kingdom hurt me. She says she friend, but hurts. Burns." Alaska mumbled. His dad's face turned furious, and Alaska flinched, afraid that some of that anger was directed toward him. Alaska didn't want his dad ever to be mad at him. His dad's face changed to one of concern again, and Alaska felt America's hands run through his wings, causing Alaska to melt at his dad's touch.

"I'm not mad at you, Lasky. I could never be mad at you. I'm mad at the people who have put you through all this pain. You don't deserve it, my sweet boy," he said. As Alaska's arm moved, he let out a surprised and pained one. But then Alaska smiled, his dad's words filling him with warm happiness.

Alaska loved him so much.

"Minnie will treat your burn now. Are you okay?" his dad asked. Alaska buried himself into America's side, curling up against his dad's body. He nodded slowly and felt his dad continue preening his neck feathers. Then, Alaska closed his eyes and looked away from the burn.

Alaska didn't want to see his bubbly, bright red skin again. It scared him. It scared him so much. That's why Alaska wanted his dad so badly. He makes everything less scary.

He makes everything better. He always makes things better.

Alaska heard his dad begin singing softly. His hands worked their way through Alaska's feathers, and the tips of his wings shuddered from the stimulation.

It was so nice Alaska could almost fall asleep. But he couldn't. Every time he thought he wanted to or was about to, pain from the burn jolted him awake.

Alaska felt his tears beginning to force their way out of his body, his body shaking like a leaf from his cries.

"It hurts Папа! It hurts!" Alaska cried out as his sobbing became

louder, and the pain grew. Minnesota was putting some sort of cream on the burn, and it hurt so badly that Alaska could hardly think straight. He couldn't even figure out how he was still conscious.

Alaska felt his dad's hands pause, and he tensed, afraid he messed up.

"I'm so sorry, Icey. But I have to treat it so it doesn't get worse." Alaska heard Minnesota say. He nodded, but still, the tears came.

"I'm sor–sorry for crying," Alaska stuttered, fearful that his dad would order the tending of the burn, the good feelings, to stop, to end.

"You have nothing to be sorry for. Crying is natural and okay. You are in pain. You never have to apologize for crying because of that." His dad said as he wiped tears from Alaska's face. Alaska whimpered, missing the singing and also out of confusion.

His Отец said that crying was bad and wrong. But his dad said it was okay and good. Who was right?

Alaska was with his dad, so he should pretend his dad was right, right?

Alaska didn't know.....

He was hurt and confused. Everything his dad and his Отец said conflicted, and it confused Alaska. He loved his Отец, and he loved his dad. Who was really telling Alaska what was right?

Was it his dad?

Was it his Отец?

Was it neither?

Alaska was trying to stop his crying, but he couldn't. He just buried his face back in his dad's chest, tried to swallow back down the bile, and tried to relax under his dad's care.

But that was hard. Everything hurt.

His dad returned to his singing, the words blending into nothing more than a comfortable feeling. The urge to sleep was returning, and the pain was dying down as Alaska could feel his sister wrapping up the injury. Alaska smiled and then pressed his face deeper into his dad's chest.

Alaska was pretty sure he could sleep now, and he began trying to, but he could hear Minnesota start a conversation with his dad. Alaska groaned as his dad's chest moved underneath him as they talked.

Alaska wanted her to go away, for all the other sounds to fade. He just wanted the world to be him, his dad, warm, and sleep.

Alaska just wanted it to be that.

"Папа....sleepy. I want quiet," Alaska murmured. The conversation stopped before he felt his dad's fingers slowly running down the part of Alaska's back where his wings met his body. His dad then began gently massaging there, and Alaska felt his sleepiness grow. His eyes slipped shut instantly.

"Good night, Lasky," Alaska heard his dad say. Alaska mumbled something before his mind faded away, sleep overtaking his warm, limp, comfortable body.

_____

Awareness returned to Alaska slowly. Very slowly. Alaska wasn't aware of much at first, but he quickly became aware of a pressure on his chest and the bandages on his throbbing arm.

Alaska was lying down now, probably on his bed. His dad must have moved him there after Alaska passed out. That was nice of him.

Alaska cracked his eyes open and saw his dad sleeping on his chest. Had his dad been there the entire time Alaska was asleep?

His dad's hand was holding Alaska's, and he looked more peaceful

than Alaska had ever seen him. Alaska licked his dry lips, recognizing that the bile and vomit had been cleaned off his face.

Alaska closed his eyes, still feeling tired. Emotionally too.

Alaska knew Hawaii hated him.

He didn't realize she hated him that much.

And she was so manipulative, too, even having the audacity to say they were still friends. Alaska hated her.

Hate?

He...he did. He did hate her. He had to hate her after all she did. Right?

Alaska shook aside doubts. He couldn't be weak and decide not to hate her. He had to be strong, hate those who hurt him, and love those who care for him.

"Lask?" Alaska heard his dad's tired voice say. Alaska opened his eyes again and smiled tiredly at his dad. His dad smiled back, relief clear on his face. "How are you doing, bud?"

"Tired. Arm is sore, but the pain is less." Alaska answered. His dad nodded.

"That's good. I'm glad to hear it." His dad said, putting a hand on Alaska's forehead as if to check for a fever. Alaska leaned into it, happy that his dad still loved him despite what had happened.

"Why did you stay with me?" Alaska asked.

"Because you are my son, and you are hurt. I didn't want to leave you alone after you were injured so badly. And I wanted to make sure you were safe from Hawaii. When you are okay with me leaving, I will, and I'll make sure that Hawaii never comes near you or your siblings ever again." His dad said, his voice taking on a dangerous tone.

"You would do that to ensure I don't get hurt?" Alaska asked. His

dad nodded.

"For you, Alaska, I would move heaven and earth to keep you safe," His dad said. Alaska felt tears appear in his eyes, moved by his dad's words. His Отец had never said anything like this before.

Alaska felt warm and happy. He closed his eyes, ready to sleep again.

"You can go talk to Hawaii Папа." Alaska said, "I'm going to sleep again."

He felt his dad's hands brush through his hair again before a kiss was placed on his forehead.

"Sleep well, Lasky."

Kindred Spirits

Ireland and Choctaw meet in person for the first time, requested by Im_so_fucking_tired

May, 1990

County Mayo, Republic of Ireland

Contae Mhaigh Eo, Poblacht na hÉireann

Ireland exhaled a shaky breath as he looked out at the people attending the Famine Walk. He was leaning on his cane, as he wanted to participate without his wheelchair. The cane's familiar presence helped Ireland feel grounded.

While Ireland's people today understand the trauma of an Gorta Mór, they didn't witness it as Ireland did. Standing here, Ireland could close his eyes and see his people, the ones who originally completed this walk on that harsh winter day. Ireland might not have been there himself, but he saw enough of an Gorta Mór to know what it had to have looked like.

The starving, the sick, and the bodies.

Ireland shook his head, squeezing his eyes shut as he tried to push aside the memories. He didn't want to think about them. He knew if he did, he would be overwhelmed by them, and he didn't have his children here to help him through that.

"The memories hurt, don't they?" Ireland heard an unfamiliar masculine voice from behind him ask. He had an accent, one that sounded somewhat like America's but wasn't. Maybe a regional American one?

Ireland turned around, taking some of his weight off his cane. Hissing slightly, more weight was put onto his bad leg and brace there.

The man's features surprised Ireland. He wasn't a human. His flag was purple, with a yellow seal in the center. The seal was yellow, with a red bow, quiver, and arrow in the center. Outlining the seal was a blue band, separated from the yellow and purple by a green braided-looking line. In the blue band were the words, 'The Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation.'

The Choctaw Nation. A Native American Nation.

What was he doing in Ireland's country?

"Dia duit," Ireland said, not sure what else to say. He had never expected to meet this man, although Ireland certainly had much to say to him. But words failed him, and he was silent. The Choctaw Nation smiled.

"Halito, Ear-ree," he said. Ireland laughed at Choctaw's attempt to say his name in Gaeilge.

"It's Éire. That's how you pronounce my name." Ireland said. The Choctaw Nation looked embarrassed.

"Oh, my apologies. I–I didn't realize," he said, his voice flustered. Ireland smiled.

"Don't worry about it. Your trying to speak it means enough," he said, smiling broadly, feeling the happy flutters in his chest that always appeared when he heard another nation speak his language. After so many years of England and Britain trying to beat his language out of him, so many years of being told it was useless, hearing a nation try to speak it was amazing.

The Choctaw Nation smiled. He seemed just as unsure of what to say as Ireland did, but his smile seemed to communicate more than words ever could—it communicated understanding, much more than words could say.

However, colonized peoples always seemed to understand more about each other than they could say. Words were hard, but understanding wasn't.

"Why have you come?" Ireland asked, hoping to break the silence.

"I came with some of my leaders. We heard about the Famine Walk, and we decided to come because during your famine, we—" Ireland cut him off.

"I remember," He stated plainly.

"You remember?" The Choctaw Nation asked, looking surprised. Ireland blinked, also surprised. Had he really expected Ireland to forget that?

"Why would I forget?" Ireland asked. He never forgot the countries who chose to help him during that time. Ireland never forgot the groups of impoverished people who helped him. Why would he forget the people who showed him more compassion than Britain ever did?

And Ireland remembered the Choctaw's donation very well. They were just like him in many ways, and even when they had little, they still chose to help Ireland. Ireland won't forget kindness like that.

If The Choctaw Nation had looked at a loss of words before, he looked even more at a loss now. Did Ireland's remembering really surprise him that much? Ireland shifted positions, readjusting the way he was using his cane. Ireland had been standing up for too long, and his knee was starting to protest the weight of his body.

"Are you alright?" Ireland asked, starting to get concerned. That seemed to break The Choctaw Nation out of his shock, and he nodded.

"I'm not used to being remembered like that, especially not by your people. Especially not by...I...do your...I expected your people to forget. I didn't even think...I...it's amazing that you do," he said. Ireland chuckled.

"I don't think it's amazing that I remember. I have no reason to forget. What is amazing, however, is the fact that you decided to help. You needed that money." Ireland said. The Choctaw Nations titled his head, dark brown eyes showing warmth and amusement.

"So did you, Éire. My people were struggling, yes, but yours were dying. Like mine had. We wanted to ease your pain. We knew what it was like. And it's not just something you ignore, that you don't try to help." he said.

"Go raibh maith agat. That means–"

"I remember." The Choctaw Nation said with a cheeky grin. Ireland grinned back, laughing slightly.

"Haváí gave you my message then?" he asked.

"She did."

"Then why did you think I would forget?"

"It's been a long time since 1847." The Choctaw Nation said. Ireland nodded.

"Indeed it has been," Ireland said, his hand drifting down towards his knee brace as he rubbed the fabric. Things have changed a lot since then.

"What happened to your leg, Éire, if you don't mind me asking?" The Choctaw Nation said that the movement of Ireland's hand was probably catching his attention. Ireland flinched at the memories, phantom pains running through his knee, mixing with the actual chronic pain he had there. Ireland hissed in pain, closing his eyes.

Then Ireland sighed.

"The cost of independence is a lot," Ireland said, tears in his eyes. He only wished his athair could have been there to see independence achieved. It was hard adjusting to being independent while adjusting to the fact that Ireland would never walk normally again alone, to life with one eye alone. But Ireland endured. His scars are a tribute to what he survived, and Ireland wouldn't give them up for anything.

"But it was worth it." The Choctaw Nation responded. Ireland nodded.

"It is always worth it to fight for yourself and your people." Ireland said, "Now, enough sad talk. We are both old men, and I think we should swap some happier stories."

The Choctaw Nation's lips twitched, and he nodded.

"That sounds fun, Éire." He said. Ireland limped over and wrapped an arm around his shoulder.

"Good. I want to make sure you have fun while you visit my country, so long as you return the favor when I visit your nation," Ireland said.

"You want to visit my nation?"

"Of course I do! You're a nation, and part of being a nation includes having relations with other countries. You came to visit me, so I visit you. Diplomacy! And friendship." Ireland said. The Choctaw Nation smiled, slightly teary-eyed.

Ireland smiled back. He was glad to finally got to meet the nation who helped him.

He hoped they would be able to meet with each other more in the future.

Good allies are hard to find.

The River

Delaware and New Jersey's border disputes. Requested by SmashingAsh98

"I can't believe you, NJ! After all of your fucking complaining about how York steals land from you and the whole fucking fight over the reclaimed land in Ellis Island, you decide to steal land from me in the same way!" Delaware yelled at his brother, who looked to be a mixture of confused and nervous.

"How do you even know the specifics of me and York's fights?" He asked, most likely trying to avoid the question.

"One, don't avoid the question. Two, you and York are free entertainment for the rest of us," Delaware said. New Jersey looked annoyed but didn't protest.

"Our border is in the middle of the river, except for the Twelve Mile Circle, where our border is at the shoreline. I'm not stealing land. Your territory is just water. I am, however, gaining more land for myself because I need it. You don't need that little bit of water. Learn to share with your siblings," New Jersey said.

"Oh fuck you, NJ. It doesn't matter whether or not I need it. What matters is that you are ignoring my borders! After all your bitching about Yorkie, I figured I would never have to worry about that from you, but seriously? What the hell, man? All of my neighbors have tried to steal land from me." Delaware said, throwing up his arms in exasperation.

"Well, unlike Penny and Mary, I'm not trying to annex you, so at least that's something." New Jersey said. Delaware crossed his arms and turned to leave.

"I'm getting Dad!" He yelled as he began to walk out of the room

"You're gonna fucking tattle? What are you, five?" Delaware heard

New Jersey snark from behind him.

"You rather me break your nose?" Delaware snapped, whirling around. New Jersey's eyes widened, and he held his hands, shaking his head.

"Dad, it is then." He said.

———————

"It's the 21st century. I thought we'd be over having border conflicts by now." Their father said with a sigh.

"At least our first response was to take it to court, and now we fight each other over it. No one has pulled out weapons!" Delaware chimed in, hoping to lower his dad's annoyance and make him more willing to support Delaware.

"Not yet, at least. But I'm at least going to get ready for a fight." New Jersey added. Their father sighed deeply, once that seemed very resigned.

"Thank you, NJ. That's going to do wonders for resolving this situation peacefully," he said, his voice heavy with sarcasm.

"Yeah, I know it really will," New Jersey said cheerily, either oblivious to their father's sarcasm or just ignoring it. It was probably the second one, although New Jersey would deny it. Their father sighed and put a hand on his forehead.

"Please just take it to court and leave me out of it." He said.

"You aren't going to be able to stay out of it because one of us is inevitably going to do something really stupid that's going to force you to get involved. And just know—New Jersey started it and is going to start the fighting most likely, so I'm innocent, and you should side with me!" Delaware said, saying the last part quickly. New Jersey's head shot up, and he glared at Delaware. His ears flattening against his head, he bared his teeth.

Their father just looked annoyed again.

"New Jersey, please don't attack your brother in any way. Just take this to court, and both of you show up," he said before walking out.

"Yeah, Delly, make sure you show up in court." New Jersey said. Delaware snorted.

"Please. You're the one acting like New York did. If anything, you're going to neglect to show up to court," he said. New Jersey took a step forward, hooves clicking against the ground.

"Don't compare me to the egotistical chicken!" he said, and Delaware looked at him offended.

"Hey, now, that's an insult to chickens," Delaware said. New Jersey paused and nodded.

"Okay, yeah, fair enough. I'm sorry, chickens. But fuck you, Delaware, you aren't going to steal that land that I legally reclaimed." New Jersey said. Red-hot anger ran through Delaware's body at that.

"YOU RECLAIMED IT IN MY RIVER!" Delaware yelled at him.

"We share it!" New Jersey said with an eye roll.

"MY SECTION THOUGH!" Delaware continued.

"Actually you own up to the shoreline. I just helped it grow a little." New Jersey said with a smug grin.

"I'm going to destroy you in court." Delaware hissed out with a glare as he flicked his tail before turning away.

"You can try!" New Jersey called from behind Delaware, making him wish he was allowed to punch New Jersey's stupid face.

It would be good therapy.

Confessions

I wrote this oneshot while listening to the Hawaiian Language Moana soundtrack. It's now become my new writing music.

2016

America's father was strange and persistent. Ever since the end of last year, he had been messaging America and the other so-called "favorites," asking them to meet him at his house so he could tell them something important. America had asked some of his other siblings and niblings if they had gotten the invitation, but none of them had, which just made America more curious as to why Britain wanted all of them to meet up.

It had taken a while, but they had finally reached the point where they could all show up at his house at the same time.

"Okay, does anyone have any idea of what is happening?" America asked New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Queensland, and Australia who had arrived before he had. New South Wales shook his head.

"Nah, mate. None of us Australians know shit. Have you asked the Canadians? Or the Kiwi?" America nodded, and New South Wales sighed.

"Why is Grandpa so insistent that we have to be here today at the same time? It's not like he invited any of the other favorites. It's just some Canadians, some Australians, Kiwi, and you." South Australia commented, crossing his arms.

"Maybe he has something he wants to tell all of you at once?" Caleb suggested for the thousandth time. Normally, America would tell him that they have nothing in common that would require them to be here simultaneously, but he didn't want to look insane in front of his family.

"You told the world you had DID ages ago. Why does it matter?" James asked, his voice gentle like aways.

"Yeah, they already know. They ain't gonna think you're crazy," Conch Republic added.

Ignoring the fact that James was right, America began to start small talk with his Australian family as they waited for the invited Canadians and New Zealand to show up.

"Hey guys! Have you figured out why Dad is so insistent on us showing up today?" British Columbia, followed by Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba, and Northwest Territories, said as he approached them.

"No, we were waiting for the rest of you since Dad was so insistent that we all show up together," Western Australia said with a small smile.

"He's been a nuisance about that," Tasmania said. Australia wrapped his arm around her shoulder.

"The great British Empire, reduced to begging for his former colonies to come and see him, ain't that right, Tassy?" He said.

"What do you mean, 'former colonies'? If I recall correctly, none of you have left the Commonwealth yet, which means I'm the only true former colony."

"We get it, America. You have an ego," New Zealand said from behind them, finally arriving. Some of America's family members began snickering at that, along with some of the other alters. America rolled his eyes.

"Ha ha, that's so funny. Well, we're all here now. Let's see what Dad wants. I hope it's quick, though, because I have things I need to do," he said.

"Delly said it's okay if you need to miss his pseudo birthday. He knows you fought to get a different date, and it's not like anyone remembers this is his pseudo birthday anyways." Molossia commented.

"Like what, inflate your ego some more?" South Australia asked, causing another round of snickering.

"He probably wants to since we are all attacking it. You can't see how he's trying to say he doesn't have an ego." Queensland said.

Queensland was, unfortunately, right. America flipped her off and then opened the door to their father's house. Tasmania had picked the lock while they were making small talk earlier.

"Grandfather! We are here! Please tell us why you wanted us all here!" New Zealand yelled.

"In the kitchen! Take off your shoes at the door, especially the Australians!"

"Calling us out specifically, huh, Grandpa?" Queensland asked.

"You are all crazy and spend half your time doing dangerous stunts that will get you killed," Their father yelled back at her.

"You're right, but hey!" Australia said, not making any moves to remove his shoes, tracking dirt everywhere. America tried his best to hold down his snickers, as he had also not removed his shoes.

"People said he was basically an American colony during World War Two for a reason," Caleb commented, prompting a snort of laughter from Eastport.

Well, pushing aside the fact that America might have semi-adopted his nephew, their group made their way into the kitchen, where England and Britain were arguing in sign language.

"If you guys are going to argue, we can come back later," Manitoba said, stopping the argument in its tracks.

"Wow, if they had stopped arguing, they must have really wanted us here," Newfoundland and Labrador whispered to Western Australia, who did her best to stifle her giggles.

"I can hear you," their father said, his tone lacking amusement.

"Good," Western Australia shot back. Their father rolled his eyes, and England slunk out of the room, giving their father one last glance.

"What was that about?" Northwest Territories asked. Their father waved his hand dismissively.

"Don't worry about it, Northwest. That's something me and England have to work out ourselves. Now, for why I called you here."

"Finally." South Australia said, straightening up. Their father exhaled once, looking like he was trying to calm his nerves.

"I've been lying to you for a long time." He said. America snorted as James murmured no shit.

"Yeah, we know you are a liar. But you've been getting better at that." America said.

"Yeah, Uncle Ame is right. You've been better at that. If that is all you needed to say, Grandfather, I think you might be disappointed to know we already knew that." New Zealand added.

"Yes, I knew you were aware of that. But this is more of a secret England wanted me to keep. It's part of why we were arguing when you came in." Their father said. America could see several members of the group perk up at that.

"And you are telling us?" Australia asked.

"Yes...all of you were called 'favorites' by many of my former colonies. I know not all of the so-called favorites are here right now, but there's a reason for that. See, you twelve are the colonies I tried to protect by keeping secrets from you. The fact that you had another parent."

America froze.

"WHAT?" New South Wales exclaimed, baring his teeth. Their father raised his hands in a gesture of surrender.

"My children, I never wanted to hurt you with this, but I believe

you have finally matured into wonderful people who were ready to learn that uncomfortable fact. Rest assured, though, I did this to protect and help you." His father put a hand on America's cheek and smiled at him, and America felt sick. He wanted to say something, anything, but he couldn't. He was frozen in place, shaking legs and a pressure in his throat. He wanted to cry and scream and stop feeling comforted by the hand on his face.

But America just stood there and stared into his father's eyes, which were empty of regret.

"I did this out of love. It's what allowed you to be so well-behaved and favorites as well," he said, pulling his hand back before crossing his arms, looking smug as he did so.

"Dad...please tell me you're lying..." Manitoba said

"He has to be! My kids are here! If they had other parents, we would know!" New South Wales insisted.

"Hey, yeah, Dad's right. If we had other parents, we would know. After all, Northwest's kids knew!" Tasmania said.

"Well, he did. Once upon a time. But he planned to tell you before you were mature enough to understand that. I tried to convince him to back down, but he refused. So I fixed that. As for Northwest, well they chose to stay silent. It was a smart choice on their part. After all, they were always mature." Britain said. New South Wales collapsed as Queensland and South Australia rushed to catch him, chest heaving as he fought off what looked like a panic attack.

"And yet I wasn't told about my other parent." Northwest Territories said quietly. Britain shot him a small smile.

"Well, you didn't need to know that. You just needed to know your place, lest you end up like him," Britain said, gesturing to New South Wales.

"What did you do to me?" Said the state in a broken tone, clearly hurt by the betrayal. America was too and was half convinced James and Caleb were the only reason they were still standing. As

they slowly began fronting, the Conch Republic threatened murder against Britain.

"I just fixed your problems and removed some corruption. I know this might hurt to hear, but I do love you, NSW. That's why I had to hurt you, even though I didn't want to," Britain said, his words sounding like empty promises.

But you could hear it in his voice.

"He is actually serious about what he's saying! He actually believes that what was most likely torture was for some bullshit greater good and actually thinks it helped his son. He's delusional! I know he abused you despite you being a favorite, but I didn't realize that other favorites were treated worse!" Molossia ranted, anger in his voice.

"I wasn't abused," Ameriac said softly, not knowing if it was him trying to convince the clothes or him trying to convince him. America lowered his head to make eye contact with his father. "I wasn't abused, right?"

"America..." James murmured.

America hated how small and weak his voice sounded. Britain looked offended at America, even suggesting that.

"Of course not!" He said, causing relief to fill America's body, relief that was quickly replaced by horror as he continued his statement, "I mean, even though you might have known, England used your martial law to fix that, so we wouldn't have to hurt you, and that way you wouldn't go running off with the natives and get yourself killed."

America's knees finally gave out, and Australia scrambled to catch them, tears rolling down the Australian's face. Was he crying for America or his father? America didn't know. But did he really ever know anything?

Tears were appearing in his eyes, and his breath began to get more and more uneven and shaky.

"America breathe. You have to breathe." James said.

America...he didn't think the marital law had affected him that badly. What else did England force him to believe...and to forget?

"What else?" America asked shakily, in a small moment where his breathing evened out.

"What else what?" his father asked, the same fucking smile on his face as if he hadn't just told America that England mind-controlled him into forgetting he had a mother, mind-controlled him into forgetting so much about himself.

"What else did England do to me?" America snarled out as someone else began co-fronting, helping them stay standing as fury pumped through their veins.

"He just ensured you'd be loyal to the church and the government. It's no big deal. Honestly, you twelve are being so dramatic. It's not like you can even talk to your other parents. They're most likely dead. And if they aren't, well, I don't remember who they were. It was useless information. You can find out on your own."

"But what if they're dead?" Newfoundland and Labrador asked, her arms wrapped tightly across her body.

"Well, I think that's more your fault than mine. Canada and America were always better at hurting the natives than I was. If you North Americans need someone to blame for the deaths of your family, blame them." Their father said casually. A loud ringing began in America's ears, and he pulled away, letting whoever was co-fronting take charge.

He had to get away. America needed to get away.

America was in his bedroom now, in his apartment in Washington. He had left the country world. The ringing in his ears was still present but quieter than it had been before.

"Guys." America asked softly, "What happened?"

"You started having a panic attack. I know you don't like anyone seeing

them, so James began co-fronting and left the group. You've been asleep for a little while since then." Unorganized Territory explained.

"You also missed Northwest Territories decking Britain!" Molossia exclaimed.

America exhaled a little sigh of relief before smiling slightly at Molossia's comments, although the smile quickly faded.

"Thanks, James. You're a lifesaver." America said before curling up in the fetal position.

"He knows...but are you alright, America?" Caleb asked, his voice gentle

"No. I feel sick and betrayed and...and...I can't believe...England fucking took advantage of the martial law to like...fucking brainwash me or some shit. Is this even my real personality? How much of me did he change? Why didn't I fucking notice something was wrong?" America stood up and left the bedroom, pacing around the room as he tried to control his growing anxiety.

"He couldn't have changed everything. Besides, you've grown a lot since then. Any of your real self that was buried can and probably has come back." Conch Republic pointed out.

"You aren't as changed as he wants you to think, either. I knew you then, and I know you now. Not everything gone is dead. Besides, we have Yapam still, so it's still there somewhere," James added, and America could tell from his tone of voice that he was smiling gently.

America passed by the open door to the bathroom and caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror. He paused and then walked into the room, flicking on the lights as he did so. America was still in his country form, his stars moving around frantically, a sign of his anxiety.

America dropped his country form, letting his human form appear. America looked at himself in the mirror and burst into tears.

How was America so fucking stupid as to not see it before?

Did England use the martial law to ensure that America wouldn't see it until he and Britain wanted him to?

How did America not see how non-white he was?

And what Britain had said before James began fronting.

America killed his mother.

"He's a manipulative liar! Why are you trusting him? Why are you blaming England and yourself but not him?" Molossia ranted.

"Because he's right. I killed my mother. I...I...this is my fault." America said panic swelling. He couldn't be here. He couldn't—

America brought himself back to the country world, in his house, trying his best to block out the others' attempts to make him think he wasn't at fault when he so clearly was.

They were wrong. America was a monster.

Defenestrations

Defenestrations of Prague, requested by _Lqmie. I chose to do the 1618 one. Sorry this took so so long, I was having trouble writing it.

Hradčany Castle, Prague, Kingdom of Bohemia, Holy Roman Empire

May 28, 1618

Bohemia stared down the Holy Roman Empire as he entered the room, followed by four of his Catholic deputies. His gray eyes swept the room, taking stock of everything before they focused on the kingdom and met her gaze.

"Hello, Bohemia," he said. Bohemia gritted her teeth, trying to prevent herself from saying something she would regret and that would make this situation worse.

It was harder than it looked. Bohemia hated politics sometimes. There was all the subterfuge and hiding what you really believed and felt until you couldn't hold it back any longer, and then things exploded into war.

Hopefully, this would end up triggering a war, and Bohemia would most likely be declared in open rebellion. Maybe that's what was needed. But still, she needed to prove a point and prove the point she would. After all, this city was the site of several defenestrations before, so it was only fitting to make it the site of another.

"Hello, Holy Roman Empire. I'm sure you know what we are here to talk about," Bohemia said, hoping the empire would not try to play the innocent, unknowing man who was being unjustly accused of something he didn't know was wrong.

Empires loved pretending they were innocent of everything. This was infuriating for non-empires who had to deal with it. They were ignored, walked over, and expected to remain doormats to them. It

was especially worse for Bohemia because, as a member of the Holy Roman Empire, she technically had to obey him.

Technically.

"You are upset about the closing of the churches, are you not?" Holy Roman Empire asked.

"Yes, I am. Emperor Rudolf II promised us religious freedoms in the Majestätsbrief. Emperor Ferdinand II violated those promises by closing the Protestant churches after promising to respect the Majestätsbrief. Then he gave the land to the Catholic Church and arrested those who tried to protest what he did." Bohemia stated, feeling her confidence grow as she spoke.

"They were disturbing the peace and trying to obstruct the work of God." Holy Roman Empire cut in. Bohemia ignored him and continued to speak.

"Then, we ask you to release those who were wrongfully arrested, who were arrested in the protest, and we tell you emperor about how he is infringing their rights to own property and to enjoy the freedom of worship. And you refuse and deny everything. You are clearly ignoring the Majestätsbrief and what it promised us." Bohemia said, standing up. Holy Roman Empire raised an eyebrow.

"Is that the reason for the large crowd outside?" He asked, his voice cold, as he refused to show any emotion to anything. It was more infuriating than him just being an asshole.

"It's a demonstration. My people and I won't take your violation of our rights lying down, which brings me to another topic. Did Emperor Ferdinand II order us to bow to his will on pain of death, and did you Catholic deputies encourage him to adopt this stance?" Bohemia asked. The Holy Roman Empire laughed.

"You really are desperate for a reason to revolt, are you? Fine, we'll satisfy your needs. My deputies will prove their innocence, and then we can all leave, and you can end your demonstration." He said, gesturing towards the first of his deputies to speak. Bohemia felt her fists clench and tried to stay calm. Being rash would do her no good

here.

Bohemia made eye contact with Holy Roman Empire, who just smiled at her as his deputy spoke. Bohemia wasn't paying much attention to what the deputies were saying. That's why some of her Protestant leaders were here, to take care of the trial. Bohemia was here to show solidarity, but now it seems she's been put in charge of watching Holy Roman Empire, who looked so smug about everything that it was insufferable.

Once the four Catholic deputies had finished giving their reports, the leaders Bohemia had with her decided who was guilty and who was innocent. Much to her disappointment, Adam II von Sternberg and Matthew Leopold Popel Lobkowitz were found innocent and allowed to leave.

Hopefully, the crowd left them alone. If not, that didn't bother her that much.

But that did leave us with three enemies up here. Holy Roman Empire, Count Jaroslav Bořita of Martinice and Count Vilem Slavata of Chlum.

"Now, what do you plan to do? You've declared them 'guilty,' but you don't have the power to put them in jail or enforce that sentence. Just back down. It'll make things easier for us all." Holy Roman Empire said.

"You want to go back down? Well, that can be arranged," Bohemia said, standing up. Holy Roman Empire looked at me confused.

"What do you mean?"

"I'm going to defenestrate you," Bohemia repeated before she and her leaders got hold of the two men while Holy Roman Empire disappeared on them.

"Coward." Bohemia spat out, "At least we still get to throw the other two out the window."

She turned back to face the Prostant Leaders, smiling as she watched them throw the two men out the window. She walked over

to the window, and much to her surprise, both of them were still alive.

"Dammit." She muttered.

Both were alive, even if one was being carried away by his servants, and Bohemia didn't get to throw the Holy Roman Empire out the window like she wanted.

But still, she achieved her one goal.

Making a statement.

Nieuw York

For NewLostIslands , who inspired this little oneshot in the first place. Thank you Aili, for always knowing what questions to ask. Underline is English, Bold is Italian, and Italics is Swedish

1900

A new century was always the perfect time to start working on a new house.

New York was with a group of people he had employed to help him dig out the foundation of his house and build it. While New York had always enjoyed being able to construct his home on his own, but new technological advancements and his lack of understanding of them made it harder to do that.

At least New York was still keeping his old house in Albany. An electricity-free house that actually makes sense to him would probably be much better than this house outside of New York City. Still, the city never seemed to stop growing, so it was essential to have a place nearby. If anything, it would give his pap a place to stay when he's in town like he is now.

"Mister New York! My brother found a dead body! He says it looks like it has recently passed. What should we do?" One of the workers called from the other side of the construction site, panic in his voice.

"What?" New York exclaimed, dropping what was in his hands and rushing to the worker. The worker was now comforting his brother, who looked horrified at what he had seen.

"Are you alright?" New York asked the brother, who shook his head. New York turned to face the man who had called him over.

"You two go home. Get some rest. I'm sorry you had to discover

this. Rest assured, I will make sure you get into no legal trouble for this. This was not your fault," New York told them. The man nodded and left, with his brother leaning on him.

New York then peaked into the hole they had been digging and immediately spotted the body. New York knew from the skin colors that it was one of them. A countryhuman that had their life taken from them and wasn't buried with respect. New York swore. This just got a lot more complicated. His father would have to be notified, and they would have to hope that they could identify the body in case any relatives wanted to claim it.

New York then approached the workers, standing around with hesitation and fear.

"It's one of us. I know we were supposed to work on the foundation, but I think we should hold off on that until we can move the body and give them a funeral. I'll still pay you for today's work. Enjoy a day off, and thank you for all your help," New York told the workers.

"Grazie New York." Their supervisor said before they began to pack up their equipment.

"And can one of you go to City Hall? My father is there with the mayor and needs to be notified of this." New York asked.

"I can do that for you, New York. I have to go by there anyways." One of the workers said. New York gave him a grateful smile before helping them back up the rest of their things.

New York walked back over to the hole where the half-buried body was. The body was female, with orange, white, and blue skin. Thankfully, The clothes were not fully composed, and a covering remained over her body. She was lying face down, and a wound was visible on her back. Something about her seemed...familiar...like it was scratching at a long-forgotten itch in New York's brain.

Before he really knew what he was doing, he had walked down to her body. She looked...she looked so much like a recently deceased

body. It was strange to think she had been here for at least a hundred years. New York put a hand on her shoulder, her body deathly cold. He slowly turned her face upwards so he could look at it and froze before falling backward in shock.

It was New Netherlands. Him. Past him.

As soon as he saw that face, he could feel her memories forcing their way up, pressing against his head and causing a pounding in his skull.

"Nee nee nee! Mam, ik ben jou niet, je stierf, ik zie je lichaam, laat me alsjeblieft met rust!" (No no no! Mom, I'm not you, you died, I see your body, please leave me be!) New York said, gripping his hair, as if that would stop everything.

But it did nothing. New York was forced to his knees as the pain in his head reached an overwhelming point. A warm blackness beckoned him, calling for him to let the memories take control.

New York tried to fight it, but his body was still in front of him, and it pulled out more and more of New Netherlands, convincing him to stop fighting and let the real personification take control.

"Ik ben New York! Ik ben New York! Ik ben-ik ben..." New York trailed off as everything just got dark and fuzzy and faded. The blackness and her memories seemed to work together to make him feel so tired and weak that New York would stop replacing New Netherlands and keep her from his mind.

"Ik ben niet... echt. Ik ben een bedrieger." New York was vaguely aware of muttering before he faded into the blackness.

—English is now going to be underlined because I'm not google translating all the Dutch—

New Netherlands was so confused. One minute, she and her little brother had been racing each other through town; the next, she was covered in sweat and in a hole and apparently had wings...and a new flag. New Netherlands then looked down and screamed.

There were two different reasons for that. The first was that she was

missing her boobs and realized that she was somehow in a man's body.

The second was that there was a dead body in front of her. The body had the same flag as New Netherlands and her mother, although thankfully, it was too short to be her mother. New Netherlands wanted to get a closer look at the body, but she was trembling too much to do anything other than move and stare.

"New York? Was that you? Are you okay? The Italian worker said you found a dead countryhuman." New Netherlands heard a man say. She tore her eyes away from the body and tried to move out of the hole, away from the body, but she just lost her balance and fell. This body was much taller than mine, even if not by much. But the wings made it so hard to walk.

Then, a shadow suddenly fell over the hole, and she looked up to see a tall man, taller than she had ever seen before, looking at her. Not only that, but he was a countryhuman that bore a flag with red and white stripes and a blue canton with small stars that were in the shape of a bigger star and dark brown hair. His circular glasses seemed to reflect the light and made it impossible to see his eye color. He smiled at New Netherlands and then slid into the hole, carefully avoiding the body.

"Hey York, are you alright?" he asked, reaching out an arm, revealing more stars decorating his arms: blue stars in white stripes and white stars in red stripes, with one big white star in the center or one hand, and a circle of stars on the other.

"What are you saying? I don't understand." New Netherlands said, hoping this man knew Dutch, French, or Swedish. If he didn't, it would be much harder to figure out what happened to me. His eyes widened, and his head turned even so slightly towards the dead body.

"Shit. Out of all the states...Hello, New Netherlands. Are you alright?" He asked. He knew Dutch then. That was a major relief.

"Who—who are you? Did you do this to me? Trap me in this body of this country?" New Netherlands asked. The tall man looked at me

with kind, sad eyes.

"New Netherlands, I promise I'm not here to hurt you. I'm only here to take you back to your brother, New Sweden," the man said. New Netherlands froze. Her brother. Was he hurt? Was he trapped with this man?

"Where is my brother? How do I know I can trust you?" New Netherlands snapped. The man gave her a look full of an emotion she couldn't place.

"You don't know. But please do," he said, holding his hand out to her. New Netherlands stared at it nervously but took it. His hands were rough and scarred compared to mine, which were tiny and dainty. He pulled her up easily, and she stumbled, not used to the weight on her back.

The surrounding area vanished, and New Netherlands was in an unfamiliar room in an unfamiliar house. She was in the country world. She pulled away from the man and tripped over something, falling back on the unbelievably soft bed.

"Why did you do that?" New Netherlands snapped. The man held up his hands and looked like he was going to say something before the door burst open, and I flinched. New Netherlands turned to see who that was and saw an unfamiliar country with cow features, but something about him was strangely familiar.

"It's not him right now, Delly. It's New Netherlands. He doesn't trust me in this state. Can you try to calm him down? He found New Netherlands's body, and I need to take care of that before a human takes it," the man said. The country nodded and then turned to New Netherlands, smiling.

"New Netherlands! My sister! I missed you," the boy—New Sweden—said. New Netherlands scrambled off the bed and rushed over to give him a hug, clutching him tightly and almost knocking him over. Then she started crying a little before the tears began to rush out. She was so confused and scared, and her brother looked different. Why didn't she remember what happened to him?

"Sister, you need to sleep. I know...I know things are confusing, but you need rest. I promise I will explain everything to you when you wake up." New Sweden said as the hug ended, wiping some tears off New Netherlands' face as he led her back to the bed.

"Okay, brother. Stay? Please?" New Netherlands said. His face brightened.

"Of course I will." He said back to her in his Dutch. New Netherlands smiled and went to lay on the bed, pulling her brother onto the bed with her as she did so.

The man smiled and then left the room, allowing New Netherlands to relax more. She felt New Sweden's new tail wrap around her leg as he gave her a cheeky little smile. New Netherlands felt her expression soften into something fonder, and she pulled him close, placing her head on his chest and making sure she could hear his heartbeat.

We always slept like this when we slept together.

"Can you sing that one lullaby, bror? The one your adopted human mother would sing to you?" New Netherlands asked. Her brother nodded and then began singing softly in Finnish, the weird language his people spoke. New Netherlands closed her eyes and felt herself drifting off as her brother pulled the soft blankets over them.

"I'm sorry you had to see that York. I promise I will keep you safe." New Netherlands heard her brother whisper before she drifted off entirely.

———

New Netherlands woke up to the sound of something breaking and loud thuds, almost as if there was a fight. She jerked upwards, accidentally using New Sweden's face as a resting spot for her hand.

"Get your dirty hand out of my face, you idiot!" He snapped in a muffled and groggy voice, in a language New Netherlands didn't know. She removed her hand and shushed her brother. She didn't

know what he was saying, but the fact that there was a fight or something nearby was more important.

"Shush, little brother. Something is happening nearby." New Netherlands said. New Sweden rubbed at his eyes and yawned.

"That's probably the others. We are sharing this house with several other colonies. Plymouth and Virginia, and whatnot." He muttered sleepily.

"What?" New Netherlands asked, confused and very worried. Was that why he knew that strange language? Was it English? New Sweden was already drifting off again.

"Wake up, you tiny idiot!" New Netherlands said, shaking his shoulder, hoping for some answer. All that did was further remind her of the fact that she was in the wrong body. Remembering this made the weird feeling start again. It was like there were ants crawling all over her. New Netherlands felt really weird moving her body because it just seemed to do something that would remind her that she didn't have a female body.

Her hair was too short, her chest was too flat, her privates were changed, and she was wearing pants!

New Netherlands hoped she could get this fixed somehow before she had to use the bathroom.

"Swedes and Finns of New Netherlands, wake the fuck up!" New Netherlands said again, hoping that the distraction of her idiot little brother and wherever they were could take her mind off everything.

"Full names? Really, Chloë?" He asked, sitting up as he rubbed at one of his eyes.

"Karl, you know you can't just drop things like that on me and then try to sleep again. Why are we with the colonies of other countries?"

"Because we aren't New Netherlands anymore. That man—he's our adoptive father. This is our home, this is your room. I know...you had an accident and forgot. But even if you don't trust anything here, I swear on my life and my second chance at it that I will

protect you, okay?" Her brother said. New Netherlands didn't know how to respond to that, but she nodded, and New Sweden brightened and looked so happy.

New Netherlands knew there was probably truth to what he said, that England and his lackeys had taken them from their true mother. New Netherlands didn't know who that man was and why New Sweden decided he was our father, but she wouldn't put it past that man to have taken advantage of her brother. People had before, and in ways that weren't just making him think that he had an adoptive father.

But New Netherlands wouldn't say that, especially if she didn't understand anything. If this were good, then she would let her brother stay happy.

"Do you want to meet some of them? At least one?" New Sweden asked. New Netherlands bit her lip and then nodded.

"Alright, lillebror. Lead the way," New Netherlands said. He gave that same bright, sunshiney smile and grabbed her hand as he scrambled out of the bed, dragging her after him. They walked through the halls until New Sweden spotted someone with a yellow flag.

"HEY ASSHOLE! COME SAY HELLO TO YOUR FAVORITE DEAD PEOPLE!" New Sweden yelled at him in the same strange language.

"Hello, Delly. Are you doing okay?" The colony said, walking over.

"I'm fine, NJ." New Sweden said. New Netherlands thinks he was calling this colony NJ. What does that mean? It's a weird name.

"Delly, are you sure you won't slip into New Sweden? Are you sure this is safe? I know Dutch, too. I can talk to her—him, whatever." This NJ person sounded worried. Was her brother doing something stupid? What were they saying?

"New Netherlands never knew you. She has no reason to trust you. You know that Jersey. She won't trust anyone but me." That sounded like her name. Why were they saying her name?

"And what are you doing about the memory gaps? You barely remember anything from when New Sweden became the personification of the Swedes and Finns of New Netherlands. What if you slip up?"

"I remember that New Sweden was somewhat sickly then. I can roll with that. Besides, if I say something like, 'I was injured, and I have had memory issues since then,' she'll believe it.'

"This feels underhanded."

"It's not even her. It's still Yorkie. He's just trapped in his memories, probably convinced that he doesn't exist or is an imposter controlling her body. New Netherlands has been dead for a long, long time. Yorkie found her body, you know that. It's still our brother. We just have to keep him here until he comes back to himself. With the memories in control, he might flee in a panic or try and find the Dutch Republic, who is dead. This is the safest option. You know that." New Sweden said, and New Netherlands finally had enough of not participating in this conversation.

"What are you talking about?" She asked.

"Life. And my missing brother," NJ said in perfect Dutch. New Netherlands looked surprised at New Sweden, who smiled.

"New Jersey has picked a decent amount of Dutch over the years." He explained.

"My land is close to yours, so the Dutch speakers from New Y—Amsterdam visited my place and brought it over. You and I are the Dutch guys. He's just the baby." NJ—New Jersey said, jerking his thumb towards New Sweden as he said the last part. New Sweden pouted at that, and New Netherlands laughed.

"Swedes is a baby." New Netherlands said, wrapping an arm over her brother's shoulder and smiling at him.

"You're both hilarious." He said sarcastically, pushing her arm off his shoulder before turning to New Jersey.

"I can't believe you are getting along with your so-called sworn

enemy." He spoke to New Jersey in the same strange language.

"It's not really him." New Jersey answered, "Now, New Netherlands, what do you do for fun? Papa's got some business to take care of, and we are going to be looking after you for a while, so anything we can do to make your stay in this hellhole more bearable, let us know, and we'll be happy to help."

"No...no thank you. I just think I'll stick with New Sweden until things get worked out. You will get me back my real body...or fix this, right?" New Netherlands asked nervously. New Sweden smiled at me.

"Don't worry. By the end of the week, you'll be right as rain. Just trust me."

"Okay lillebror. I will."

A Parental Sibling

Delaware was a horrible patient most of the time, so it was concerning that he was actually being a good patient right now. His fever was so high, and he kept complaining about a headache, so all he was doing was staying curled up in bed, drifting in and out of sleep.

So now Massachusetts was on sick person duty, in charge of looking after Delaware as he tried to sleep off the worst of his illness. It was one of those things that was easier and harder than it looked.

"Come on, Delly, just take your medicine. It's going to help you feel better, I promise." Massachusetts said. Delaware shook his head, his foggy eyes making eye contact with Massachusetts'.

"Don't want it, Papa. It tastes gross, and I'm fine. It's just a small headache." He said, not seeming to realize that he had called Massachusetts Papa, something that Massachusetts was smiling so incredibly wide at. That habit died out when their father learned about them, as they didn't want to offend him. Virginia and Massachusetts hadn't been Mom and Dad to the rest of the thirteen plus Ohio for a long time.

It was nice to hear it when it happened, though. It always brought back good memories of their childhood.

"Delly, you have a hundred-degree fever, and it sounds like you are about to drop dead when you cough. You are sick. Take the medicine." Massachusetts said. Delaware shook his head and pressed his lips shut. Massachusetts sighed. This kid...

"Don't make me bring your mother in here. You know she'll just become overprotective, and I know you won't like that," Massachusetts said. Delaware's eyes narrowed.

"Are you blackmailing me with Ginny?" He asked. Massachusetts smiled.

"Yes, I am. Come on, Del, I'll let you use me as a pillow if you take your medicine." Delaware looked conflicted at the offer but then nodded.

"That is an acceptable trade. But no leaveing when I fall asleep!" He said. Massachusetts laughed.

"I wouldn't dream of it, little bro," Massachusetts said, handing him the ibuprofen. Delaware did his best to swallow the pills quickly, but his face still twisted in disgust as he did so.

"I hate pills." He said, rubbing his face. Massachusetts laughed at that.

"So I've heard," Massachusetts responded. Delaware flipped me off and then broke into a large coughing fit, his body shaking from the force of the coughs as he leaned forward. Massachusetts began to rub Delaware's back as he went to sit on the bed with him.

"I hate being sick." Delaware rasped out, leaning against Massachusetts, his eyes slipping shut.

"Are you ready to sleep now?" Massachusetts asked. Delaware shrugged and just tried to burrow further into Massachusetts' side. Massachusetts moved his hand from Delaware's back and began to play with his hair, trying to soothe Delaware and make it easier for him to try and sleep. He hadn't been sleeping well due to the coughing, so anytime he did drift off, Massachusetts wanted to keep him that way.

Massachusetts placed his hand on his forehead, taking a break from messing with Delaware's hair. He let out a worried breath as he felt how hot it was. Delawre's eyes opened slightly, and he pressured his face into Massachusetts' hand.

"Your hand is nice and cold." He said softly. Massachusetts smiled.

"And your head feels like an oven. Do you want me to get an ice pack?" Massachusetts asked. Delaware shook his head.

"No. You promised to be my pillow so you will stay my pillow. Pa-Mass, it's fine for now. Your hand is enough," he said. Massachusetts

nodded, and Delaware then relaxed against Massachusetts' side, his body growing limp and his breathing slowing.

"Sleep well, Dela. I promise you will feel better in the morning."

Colony to Superpower (Non-Canon)

Colonial America travels to the future and meets his future self, requested by RattusDomestica

Colonial America's POV

January 1, 1700

It was the first day of the new century. I was so excited. The beginning of a new century was always a fun thing to experience. It represented the end of one era, and the start of a new one. It was a tradition in my family to celebrate lasting a new century, especially for Uncle Wales and Cornwall, who had dragged Uncle Ireland and Uncle Scotland off somewhere to get drunk and celebrate surviving another century as nationless personifications.

England and Britain, meanwhile, were celebrating us, the fact that their kids had lasted this long. They were celebrating my 96th birthday soon. Or so they thought. I didn't have the heart to tell them I was 114. Besides, me talking or thinking about my time before Jamestown was wrong, according to England, and England did know what was best.

'Not all the time.'

Yes he did. Doubting that just made my head hurt, and made everyone mad at me. It was always better to just listen more often than not. Like now. England had asked me to find my uncles and bring them back home. England said that he and Uncle Ireland had plans, and needed to talk. That's why I was now outside of the house of Cornwall, nervously waiting for someone to answer the door.

"It's American Colonies-America. I'm here for my uncles." I called out nervously.

"We are coming, do not worry America!" I heard Uncle Ireland call as the door opened, revealing him, looking slightly ragged. He probably got really drunk or something. England said that was one of the few things that my uncle was good at.

"England says you and him have plans you are late for, so he's most eager to have you home." I told Uncle Ireland, who's eyes widened.

"Oh, thank you for telling me." He said. I nodded, and shifted my feet awkwardly. Uncle Ireland definitely noticed this, and decided that the best course of action was to pick me up and put me on his shoulders.

'We're so tall now!'

'We're taller than England and Union! Do you think they will play with us if we pretend we are as tall as them?'

"Do not worry America. I will be fine." He said, turning up to look at me, patting my leg. I smiled back, and we waited for the rest of my uncles to come out, and I smiled as I saw that Uncle Wales was half asleep on Uncle Scotland's back, purring up a storm.

'Do you think he and England would give us permission to sleep in his nest at some point. He looks so cozy in it and maybe that would help us with our issues falling asleep.'

'We can't ask England for that reason. He thinks he fixed that problem and we shouldn't be continuing to make a fuss over something minor that we realllyb should have fixed.'

"Your uncle doesn't feel like waking up because he's a lazy bum." Uncle Scotland said, prompting Uncle Wales to whack him with his tail, opening his vivid green eyes to sleepily glare at him.

"M'tir'd" He slurred out, and I smiled. Uncle Ireland reached out to scratch at Uncle Wales's ear, prompting his eyes to close again as his purring increased in volume.

"Isn't your uncle adorable mac?" Uncle Ireland said. I laughed.

"Uncle Irela-" I began, wanting to tell my uncle for the thousandth

time that my name wasn't Mac, but I was suddenly cut off by a bright light. I squeezed my eyes shut as a strange feeling came over my body, and I felt myself hit the ground. When I opened my eyes again, I wasn't with my uncles anymore. I was alone, outside of a big house that I didn't recognize.

'What...what just happened?'

'Where are we?'

'Oh this is bad! Our uncles will be so worried! And Union will be upset if we don't make it back in time for our piano lessons, and you know how he is when he's sad and disappointed!'

"Oh what the fuck was that. I'm high again aren't I?" I heard a voice say from my left. I turned to face where it had come from, and saw a country standing there, rubbing at one of his eyes. He had horns and what looked like cow ears. I didn't recognize the blue and yellow flag either. I quickly scrambled onto my feet.

Who's that?'

"Uh, hello?" I said nervously, trying not to make eye contact. Union didn't like when any of us colonies made eye contact with a real country, and Union had punished a lot of people for it, mostly Uncle Ireland. Union was trying to help my uncle though, he said that Uncle Ireland had sustained a head injury hundreds of years ago that convinced him he had to be a country, that he had even been a country years ago, which is what caused all the rebellions and fighting. Obviously this wasn't true, his isle had always been rightfully England's, and England didn't like how much strife his brother caused in our family. Union and England had been trying to help him heal for years, but nothing had worked.

"Hey. What the fuck is going on?" The cow country asked again, looking at me with tired eyes.

"I...don't know. I'm sorry." I said, hoping that it didn't make the country mad.

"It's fine. You look just like my dad did when he was a kid. Same

flag and everything. I should stop getting high while I have a fever because this is a weird hallucination." What the hell is he talking about? Dad? I looked like this random country's father?

"Delly you can't wander off when you have a 102 degree fever you idiot!" Another country said as she marched over.

'Delly?'

'That country is Delly?!'

That was weird. Why did my thoughts seem to be so concerned about the name Delly? It was just the name of a country. Sure, a name I didn't recognize, but maybe it was the human name of whoever this was.

Delly laughed at this.

"Hey Mama. I'm fine, I don't feel sick anymore!" 'Mama' glared at him, and Delly wilted under the look.

"I'll go back to bed now. Bye Virginia, bye hallucination of dad as a child." He said. Those words seemed to make Virginia aware of me, and she stared at me in shock, as I stared right back.

'Virg-'

'That's her-'

'It looks like-'

'What is happ-'

'Does that really make that Delly Delaware?'

'But we-they don't have bodies. How are they in front of us?'

'Imposters maybe?'

'I don't think so.'

I realized that I had been too caught up in my thoughts, and was now just staring at Virginia. I flushed bright red in embarrassment,

and was about to stutter out an apology, when Virginia cut me off.

"Don't apologize. I know how loud we can be."

'Definitely not an imposter then. No one but us knows.'

'England does.'

'But he thinks we are delusional.'

And I am delusional if I'm talking to myself. I thought furiously, trying to get my thoughts to shut up about the marital law. Thinking about it just made my head all fuzzy and sore.

"I-what?" I just said, as I rocked back and forth on my heels. Virginia smiled again, and I noticed how similar her smile was to England's. That for whatever reason made me feel more at ease, and made my body relax, almost involuntary.

"Come with me Colonies. I have something to show you." She said, grabbing my hand and taking me towards the house.

"What? What's happening? Are you really..."

"Virginia? Yes I am. What year do you think it is?" She asked. I shuffled my feet nervously.

"It's 1700..." I said, although there was no confidence in that statement. Virginia smiled.

"Well congratulations you've become the world's first time traveler. It's 2022." She said. My knees went weak and I fell, Virginia catching me.

'So all the colonies get bodies?'

'And England got a new house!'

'I wonder if they fixed Ireland's mental delusions?'

'Is Colonies dead?'

"Are you alright?" Virginia asked.

"A-am I dead?" I asked. Virginia shook her head.

"You are living and thriving. I'm taking you to meet your future self." She said. I feel weak and dizzy, nothing about any of this making sense.

Had I been drugged by someone? Was this a plot by France or Spain to gain control of me to use me against my father?

I didn't fight back against Virginia though and let her lead me though the house. My thoughts were swirling and arguing and confused. It made my head hurt. We eventually paused at the closed door to a room. She knocked on the door.

"Father. I have something you need to see." She called into the room. The door was opened, and a tall man with a strange flag opened the door. Was that...me?

'You look like an empire.'

'That's so cool! We can use that size to protect Union and England and our uncles and siblings! England must be really proud of us!'

"Delly found a strange guest in our yard." Virginia said, gesturing to me.

'Ours?'

The further version of me turned to look at me, eyes widening. He was wearing glasses, something else I found odd.

"I don't need glasses." I blurted out, not meaning to say that out loud. My eyes widened, and I felt a small amount of fear sweep through my body. My future self laughed, and took off his glasses.

"Yes you do little me." He said, giving them to me. I put them on, but the glasses were too big for my face and almost fell off, but I quickly grabbed them and then just held them in front of my face. My future self was right. Everything seemed cleared, the words on my future self's shirt clearer and easier to read.

'Is this why we are so bad at reading?'

'England just said it was corruption from the natives...'

'That might be a reason. After all, none of our biological family members need glasses.'

'It makes sense. After all, England says that the more colored people a place has, the more likely it is the personification would have physical and mental defects. We were born when. Our lands had more natives than proper people in it.'

"I recommend getting glasses when you have the chance." My future self said, pulling his-our glasses out of my hands, placing them back on his face, "I didn't find out I needed them under my first president, George Washington, got me a part after my war of independence."

I froze at those words, as my thoughts got so overwhelming loud.

'We're traitors?'

'No this is bad, this is wrong, this is bad, this is wrong.'

'How could we be so ungrateful and selfish?'

'What prompted that?'

I was having trouble being aware of my surroundings again, my thoughts too loud to let me have to focus on anything but them. When they started to calm again, I was sitting in a soft chair in a room, most likely the room my future self had been in. My head hurt, and my future self was rubbing my back.

"The colonies are very loud and demanding sometimes, huh. All of mine have bodies now. Unorganized Territory also known as US Minor Outlying Islands was the last one, despite being born in 1820. Her 'birth' was traumatic for us both, considering the circumstances." My future self said, causing Virginia to laugh, as I just stared at him in shock.

'Is he...'

"What are you talking about? The colonies aren't personified, I'm

the colonies. Any 'voices' in my head are just my own thoughts." I said. Virginia whistled at that.

"Man martial law really did fuck with you." She said. My future self snorted.

"You say that as if it didn't fuck with you too." He shot back. Virginia shrugged, with a sad smile on her face.

"What...what are you talking about? Why are you claiming that I betrayed everyone I loved?" I asked, my breathing frantic and rapid. My future self looked very sad, and turned to Virginia, speaking in a language I didn't know.

"No podemos hacerlo cambiar de opinión. Está demasiado atrapado en las mentiras de mi padre y mi tío".

"Yo sé Father. Yo sé." Virginia answered. My future self looked at me, and gave a small smile.

"Don't worry, you aren't hurting anyone in the end. Family spats happen, but you and England and Union will fix things in the end. It will be okay. Besides, I'm the most powerful country in the world, I can make things I want to happen happen." He said. I stared at him in shock, knowing that that could be true. England was supposed to be the most powerful country in the world. He was the greatest and kindest country, why wouldn't it be him?

"You sound kinda like Alaska's bio father." Virginia said, causing my future self to give her a horrified look.

'Who's Alaska?'

'And why does that seem like a bad thing?'

"I...what is going on." I said. Everything was so confusing. I just wanted to be with my uncles and my family again. None of what was happening to me could be real, right?

"Relax. We will be getting you home soon enough. But it's best you stay here so you don't get too much of a look at the future." My future self said. I nodded, but didn't relax.

I didn't know how I was supposed to relax when I was trapped in this situation. Everything just seemed wrong. Maybe I really had been given some weird substance and kidnapped. My future self then left the room, and then I heard some yelling. I winced, and curled in on myself. Yelling at my home was never a good thing. It meant someone needed to be disciplined.

Virginia gave me a sad look when I did that, and I wondered why. It's not like I did anything weird.

'Maybe she just feels bad for whoever got disciplined.'

Yeah, that must be it! It's not like she had any reason to be sad because of me. Even trapped, in either the future or a drugged dream, I knew I had the best homelife ever, no matter what fake Virginia's thought about it.

What's The Worst Way to Punish An Introvert?

Written for NewLostIslands and based on a conversation we had once

Finland didn't mean to make a mistake. He had gotten permission from his father to purchase the book. He should have specified that the book was in Finnish, but he was an idiot and didn't. He knew that it made him look more educated to read in Russian, and it allowed him to share the book with his father, not to mention it was also part of an agreement his father had with his nobility, allowing Finland to use Finnish in his daily life. But Finland bought the stupid book in Finnish; now, he and his father were in trouble.

His father got out of it easily; he was the empire, but Finland wasn't so lucky. Thankfully, his father decided his punishments, and unlike some members of his nobility who thought Finland needed to be punished more harshly regularly, he was averse to severe punishment.

That didn't mean Finland liked his punishments. That defeated the point. They always required interaction with large groups of people, and he wasn't allowed to speak Finnish or leave without his father's permission.

Not being allowed to speak Finnish wasn't supposed to be part of the punishment. His father just made that rule because the last time Finland spoke Finnish in Saint Petersburg, his father had to stop many nobles from treating him with disrespect because they thought his father wasn't educating him properly or other nonsense. His father found those rumors just as annoying as Finland did, and they often had fun together laughing over the more outrageous ones.

His father was always happy that Finland could take those insults with good humor. Finland neglected to tell his father they hurt

more than he let on. It was better to see him happy. Finland could handle it. Besides, Finland didn't even care. Why do the opinions of people he'll outlive matter to him? Finland will affect history, and they won't.

"Finland! How was the trip? I hope you didn't have to deal with anything too annoying on your way from Helsinki." Father said as he greeted Finland, a fond look in his eyes.

"I didn't, Father, don't worry. I presume you'll have me attend some of your balls and other parties while I am here? As punishment for my error?" Finland asked, the Russian language feeling foreign on his tongue. It had been a while since he had spoken the language since Finland tended to stay in his duchy, and rarely was he punished.

Finland was a good son.

"I will. I have your outfit picked out for one tonight. And your requirements will be given to you when you arrive. I expect you to be early so I can ensure you are properly prepared and don't get humiliated by some nobles who like to insult you." Father said. Finland nodded at the instructions.

"Thank you, Father. I'll prepare for it now." Finland said, walking towards the palace. He can't believe his father was making him attend one tonight. Finland was tired from traveling from Helsinki, and he knew from prior experience that showing any emotion that his father hadn't allowed him to during one of these parties only made it worse.

Finland shivered at the memories of days of parties in a row with no breaks, constant conversations, and dancing. He had never been more tired in his entire life. His feet hadn't stopped hurting for days, he couldn't stop shaking when he stood up, and he had lost his voice.

Finland was grateful that his father took time out of his schedule to help care for him, even if he couldn't promise he wouldn't take it that far again. But that was okay. Punishments were meant to make you learn, and reactions like that helped Finland stay well-behaved

and a better son.

However, sometimes, he wishes his father wouldn't attack his weaknesses with these punishments. But it's not like that was his intention. Finland knew that his father didn't know that Finland hated parties, and social interaction for long periods seemed to drive Finland closer and closer to an emotional breakdown. His father didn't know that Finland never felt an attraction to the women he tried to match me up with.

Finland would never let him know. Disappointing him wasn't allowed, and showing weakness was a sin.

Those were some of the first lessons his father had taught him. Finland made sure he used them well.

Finland entered his room and sighed when he saw the outfit his father had picked out for him. It looked stuffy, tight, and uncomfortable. Finland was a good son, though! He wouldn't disobey his father, so he put on the suit.

After Finland did that, he looked at himself in the dirty mirror. He looked a lot more like his father this way. Maybe that's why his father loved dressing Finland in these suits. Finland sighed, shifting uncomfortably in the tight material. He wished he could stay here a bit longer to reduce the time he had to spend at the party, but he knew that would just upset his father.

With a heavy sigh, Finlan prepared to leave, knowing that he would most likely have to attend this one.

It wouldn't be that bad!

———————

Finland didn't just have to attend one party—he had to participate in three, all in three days, with nearly no time to rest. Finland was exhausted and felt like his face was stuck in a permanent smile, as his father had only permitted him to express joy and smugness. Finland had let his face return to its regular expression during the first party, and his father saw it, resulting in Finland being forced to

go to the other two parties.

Finland was now looking for his father, hoping that he would be able to convince his father that three of those parties were enough punishment for the book and for disobeying his orders. Finland wasn't hopeful, but it was worth a shot. Eventually, he found his father in the library. Finland hesitantly entered, fearful of offending him.

"Father, may I ask for something?" Finland asked. His father looked up from his book and nodded, and Finland shifted nervously.

"May..." Finland said, the words dying in his throat as he struggled to gather the courage to say them.

What was he doing? Why was he questioning his father? He should be grateful, but instead, he acted like an entitled brat.

"You want to know if you've been punished enough," His father stated, reading Finland like a book, as he always did. Finland nodded, "Then explain why Stanislav."

Finland dropped to his knees, knowing the action would make his father more willing to listen.

"Father, I have learned. I won't disobey you again. I will not question you again. Let me stop going to these galas." Finland said the Russian no longer felt foreign in his mouth. But it was still hard to speak. His voice was quiet. He wasn't used to speaking this much.

His father was doing this to help Finland, though. He was trying to ensure that Finland was involved in his world, that they had a chance to be together as a family, that Finland had friends, and that he wouldn't be alone for the rest of his life. His father cared. Sure, this was technically a punishment, but it was also just his father trying to share his life with Finland.

I felt a hand on my shoulder and saw that my father had kneeled beside me.

"Okay, Finland. I think you've been punished enough," he said before standing and holding out a hand to help Finland up. Finland

smiled and took it, his father's massive hand dwarfing his own. But even then, his hand was gentle, and he did not accidentally crush Finland's hand. "Now, Stanislav, tell me, did you make any new friends?"

"No, Father, I didn't. But I found some people I think would make good friends with further conversation." Finland told him, hoping that these attempts at friends would work out.

It would make his father happy to see him happy and with others. Finland wanted that. He wanted to make his father happy. His father never seemed happy, although maybe that was because Finland really only saw him when he messed up.

But little moments like these reminded Finland of how much he loved his father. His father never stops caring.

Little America Drabble

America jerked as his head tipped forward, eyes closing briefly. He opened his eyes as he straightened, rubbing at them in annoyance. He was definitely losing in his attempt to fight off sleep. He tried to focus back on his computer screen and the half-empty Word document where he unsuccessfully tried to write an email to Nigeria.

America yawned, rubbing at his eyes again. He wasn't going to get anything done tonight, was he? America shut his laptop with an annoyed groan and stretched as he stood up from his chair. His stomach grumbled, but America ignored it, not in a mood to eat.

America stumbled into his bed and collapsed, the covers still piled on the floor from where he had thrown them a few days prior. He sighed and reached off the bed, grabbing a blanket and pulling it onto himself. His stomach grumbled again, and he groaned. For once, America wanted to sleep, but his stomach didn't like that.

America debated the pros and cons of getting out of bed, but his cat made up his mind, and he decided to make America's chest his bed.

"Hello, Coffee," America said, petting her. Maybe this would help him sleep. America closed his eyes and tried to focus on petting Coffee, not his stomach. He really wanted to sleep.

Strike Back

Doolittle Raid, requested by awart475

Event: Doolittle Raid
Codename: Conceal
Location: USS Enterprise, Pacific Ocean off Japan
Date: April 18, 1942

Ohio shivered as the cold sea air bit into his skin, the cold seeming to pierce him to his bones. North Carolina, his sister and fellow pilot, laughed.

"Cold?" She asked, a joking tone to her voice. Ohio rolled his eyes.

"At least I'm handling it better than you," Ohio said, knowing full well that his cold tolerance was much better than his sister's as he was further north. North Carolina bumped his shoulder playfully.

"Okay, Mr. Tough Guy," she said with a smirk before walking over to her modified B-25B. Ohio smiled and then walked towards his own plane.

"You know the girl?" One of his crew members, Richard, asked as Ohio approached. Ohio nodded

"She's my sister."

"Why did they let that stupid girl be a pilot?" Another one of his crew members asked the one that had always gotten on Ohio's nerves.

His name was Jackson Southgate. His family was poor and from California, but he always talked about moving his family to Hawaii. He had an inability to shut up and always thought he was better than North Carolina. He had even assumed when he first came onto the ship that North Carolina was someone's wife or had bought her way onto the ship with sex. It pissed him off.

"Because she's more capable of flying than many people like you." Ohio shot back. The rest of the crew snickered, and Jackson glared at the state. Ohio just smiled and climbed into the plane. He then started doing his pre-flight checks, knowing that everything had to be perfect, as taking off from a carrier in an army plane was stupid, risky, and dangerous.

That's why North Carolina and Ohio volunteered for this. They had the most training of all their siblings, certainly more than the humans here.

"Everything good, Lawrence?" Ohio's best friend and crew member Jermey asked. Ohio nodded.

"We are most likely not going to die today. The jury's still out on Jackson, though," Ohio commented, causing another round of snickers. Jackson wasn't the most well-liked person on the carrier, and everyone tended to avoid him due to his superiority complex.

He just thought they were assholes. He was entitled.

"You are a defensive brother," Jackson said, but he didn't say anything else. Ohio looked back at him and noticed he was giving the state an eerie, strange look. It made Ohio uncomfortable, and he moved his gaze back to the instruments on the front of the plane.

"Thank you, Jackson. That means a lot. I really love my sister," Ohio said, watching as the first plane began to take off. He swallowed nervously and exhaled, trying to calm himself. The first plane left the ship fine, so Ohio should be okay. He would be alright.

"Ready boys?" Ohio asked as he was signaled that it was his turn to take off.

"Hell yeah, we are Law! Let's go bomb Tokyo and get some revenge for our boys in Pearl Harbor," Evan, the last crewmate, said.

"And maybe impress some lovely exotic Hawaiian ladies in the process," Jackson said, making Ohio feel uncomfortable. He knew Hawaii would not like this man and that one Hawaiian lady wouldn't be impressed with him.

Well...when she was free of martial law, that is. Who knows what she thinks now? Dad and DC were both busy with their own things, so for now, it was mainly her government controlling things.

As Ohio considered Jackson's strange comment and wondered about what Hawaii was like now, he prepared for takeoff. He then pushed those thoughts away and focused on takeoff. North Carolina had already gone, so it was time to join his sister in the sky.

Thankfully, the takeoff went smoothly, and soon Ohio was on his way to Tokyo.

"Remember, boys, we are aiming for military targets. No civilian targets." Ohio said.

"We know, we know, don't worry, Rent," Richard said. The plane then fell into a comfortable silence, save for the sounds of the plane and wind. They were all nervous about this mission. After the bombing, they would be heading to China to land. This, unfortunately, was very dangerous, as they could land in a place that was controlled by the Japanese and be captured, tortured, executed, and killed.

And that's if we aren't shot down by Japanese anti-aircraft fire or fighters.

Ohio didn't want to know what Dad would do if he or North Carolina were captured. They already had enough family and friends in Japan's hands.

"I see Japan!" Jermey called as the island came into view. Ohio rolled his eyes at Jermey's excitement. They could all see the islands. As they got closer and began to fly over the bay, anti-aircraft fire began. But it was too little, and the few planes Ohio saw were not enough to take on all sixteen planes in the sky.

Thankfully, no one had been shot down as far as Ohio could see. He began to fix his sights on the city, scanning the wooden buildings for his target. Eventually, he saw it and alerted his crew, who prepared for the strike.

Then, as they flew over the target, the bomb was dropped, and the plane lurched at the loss of weight before Ohio turned the plane to China. They flew over Japan, not being pursued by anyone—not yet. But even then, Ohio didn't relax until they were out over the Sea of Japan.

Ohio sighed in relief as he realized he was safe, now in the clear.

Ohio hoped North Carolina would be as well. In any case, he'll see if she makes it in China. Ohio doesn't think anyone was shot down—at least, he hopes not.

Peshtigo

Peshtigo fire, requested by NewLostIslands

Everything was hurting. Pain echoed throughout Wisconsin's body as every movement tugged at the numerous burns on her body. She could feel someone applying a cream to the burns.

The cream was cold and barely soothed the pain. Her eyes were screwed shut, and she whimpered as the cream was applied to the burns.

Wisconsin didn't really remember how she got here. She didn't know if she was with her family or in a hospital. She didn't have the strength or the pain tolerance to open her eyes. The last thing she remembered was trying to help others escape the fire and then being forced to her knees by smoke inhalation.

Wisconsin think that's what it was in any case. Her lungs burned just as fiercely as her skin did. Breathing was hard and painful, just like everything else.

She felt a hand brush over one of the bigger burns, and she whimpered again.

"Hey Connie, you're alright," her dad's voice said. Wisconsin couldn't tell where it was coming from, if he was tending to the burns or not...but it...she was glad he was here. It was a comforting presence.

But even then, the pain didn't cease. She tried to open her eyes, but only one would open. The other one stayed sealed shut. Wisconsin weakly turned to look at her father. Her mouth opened slightly in an attempt to allow she breathing to come out easier.

His face was full of worry, but he smiled in an attempt to be reassuring. Pennsylvania was at his side, the one who was applying the cream to Wisconsin's arm. Pennsylvania must have come in a

hurry because she hadn't pinned up her sleeve on the right side, and it hung loosely.

Wisconsin tried to say something back, but all that came out was a strangled sort of groan, and tears began to flow from her one open eye.

"It's alright, Connie. Don't speak if it hurts," Her dad said, reaching for her head before stopping and sighing. Wisconsin knew what he wanted to do—that he wanted to comfort her—but he also knew that touch hurt.

His presence was comforting enough.

"I'm going to finish applying the cream. Are you okay with that?" Pennsylvania said. Wisconsin tried to give some sort of response, but instead, the pain swelled, and nausea grew in her stomach. She was on her back, so if she vomited, she would have to turn herself to my side.

Wisconsin couldn't do that.

So Wisconsin forced it down, tried to keep it from showing, as Pennsylvania seemed to take her lack of response as a yes, and slowly and gently began applying the cold cream to her burns. Wisconsin's hands clenched the bed as she tried to keep from moving, but that didn't help any, and the pain-induced nausea continued to grow.

Knowing that she would regret the coming decision, Wisconsin forced her body to the side as she puked, causing everything to blur into pain. Her eye slammed s,hut and she bit down a sob.

Wisconsin could vaguely hear the panicked voices of her dad and Pennsylvania, but nothing they said made any sense or came through to her into any comprehensible language.

The pain lessened some. But it still hurt so badly. Wisconsin wanted it to end, for it to all end. She wanted to be unconscious, or dead, or something that would just cease the agony she was feeling.

Moving wasn't a good idea, she thought, her mind slowly being

overtaken by a foggy haze that seemed to make everything...less. It was harder to think, but harder to feel, too.

So Wisconsin let it take over, and everything faded.

Tulips (Non-Canon)

Canneth requested by azaleacloud. It's a bit short, as I'm not the best at romance, but I hope you like it.

Non-Canon to my other stories, however. Only written as a request

Waiting to pick up someone from an airport always seemed to take longer than it should. Canada had been waiting for his boyfriend for an hour, even though his flight had landed 45 minutes ago.

"Basile! Sorry to keep you waiting. Baggage claim took forever," Netherlands said, as Canada saw the Dutch nation approach him in human form. Canada laughed.

"That's why you don't check your bags, Willem," Canada responded, getting out of the car to help him put his bags in it. Netherlands rolled his eyes.

"Okay, genius. I'd like to see you visit my country for a month and have so little luggage that you don't have to check the bags." He shot back, placing his backpack on top of his suitcase and moving to the passenger side door. Canada smiled, walked to the driver's side, and entered the car.

"So, Neth, what plans do you have for this trip? Aside from the usual?" Canada asked. Blushing slightly, Netherlands then stammered out that he wanted to visit some more of Canada's national parks and go hiking there.

"I was reading up on some of them, and Georgian Bay Islands National Park looks really cool. It's in Ontario, so it shouldn't be too far away. Beausoleil Trail seems like a cool hike, and it's only 8 kilometers. It's an easy hike, so I think it would be fun for us to do." He rambled. Netherlands loved hiking and spending time in the wild, so he always made it a goal to visit and hike in at least one National Park while he was in Canada's country.

"That sounds wonderful. We can stop at my house, and I can pack a bag for that trip. We can go there now and try to get a hotel room, or we can stay in Ottawa for a little while and then go to Georgian Bay," Canada suggested.

"Can we go to the park first? I can call hotels while you pack?" Netherlands asked, his face alight with joy.

"That would be great. It's probably better if we try to get a hotel reservation before we arrive there." Canada said, honking his horn at an idiot driver who cut him off. Netherlands nodded and pulled out his phone.

"I'll start making calls now." He said.

"Thanks, Tulip," Canada said, which caused him to get flustered. Netherlands always got embarrassed easily about pet names, which is why Canada loved to call him by them.

"Nada, stop doing that!" He groaned out, causing Canada to laugh.

"Why? Are you embarrassed, petite tulipe?" Canada asked. Netherlands turned red, buried his face in his hands, and dropped his phone onto his lap. He groaned, and Canada laughed loudly at his reaction.

"Nady, I won't be able to make any reservations if you keep doing this to me!" He said.

"Fine. Once you make the reservation, I'll get back to embarrassing you, ma tulipe." Netherlands groaned again but quickly went to look up hotels.

Canada turned his focus back onto the road, smiling smugly at his successful efforts of embarrassing his boyfriend.

He was amazing.

The Identity Of The State

Illinois took another sip of his drink, rubbing his eyes as he stared at the paperwork before him. After immortality, the paperwork was probably the worst part of being a statehuman. It wasn't even necessary paperwork; it was politicians asking Illinois to tell them how the state would feel about laws and then ignoring him to pursue their own political goals.

Why was he even doing this again?

Illinois sighed and pushed the paper aside, deciding to focus on his drink. He could do that later when he didn't feel like getting drunk.

Maybe Utah was right. Maybe Illinois did have a drinking problem.

Before Illinois could think about that more, he heard the door open, which was odd. This wasn't the house he lived in as the State of Illinois, but his human house. His siblings shouldn't be coming here. Pushing aside his nervousness, Illinois set down his drink and stood up.

"Hello? Who's there?" Illinois called, hoping he was hearing something. He didn't hear anything else, and he was beginning to think he misheard before something hit the back of his head. Crying out in pain, Illinois collapsed to the ground, kicking out with his feet as he fought the pain in his head.

"HELP! H—" Illinois screamed, hoping someone would hear him. He couldn't bring himself to the country world, as he was in human form, so Illinois fought with everything he had, even as another person joined in on the assault on him.

What did these crazy people want?

Illinois was grabbed from behind and pulled to his feet as another blow landed on his face, causing Illinois to slump over, fighting

through the pain in his head, trying to muster the energy to fight back.

"Ngh—stop. What'daya want?" Illinois mumbled. He wasn't given an answer; instead, another blow landed on his face. This time, Illinois didn't even have the strength to keep his eyes open as his consciousness began fading.

So, Illinois slowly stopped struggling and let the darkness take him.

When Illinois woke up, the first thing he registered was the pain in his head—blinking slowly as he tried to put his fuzzy thoughts together. He tried to move but was stopped by ropes. Illinois struggled a bit, realizing that he was tied to a chair. He tried to look around, but something covered his eyes, either a bag or a blindfold.

Illinois' head was fuzzy, too, and it was hard to fight off the urge to sleep. His head bobbled as Illinois fought to keep his eyes open. The only thing that made it easier was the terror. He had been kidnapped, in human form no less.

What did these people want from him? Was it because of his involvement with the mob? Illinois had already made plans to leave, and New York, Nevada, and he was already planning on faking his death sometime in the next week.

If this was the government or a rival mob and it concerned Illinois' involvement with the mob, he would be in a lot of trouble.

Fuck, why did he do this? Alcohol probably wasn't worth this. Illinois tugged at the ropes, hoping that maybe he would be able to free himself. He couldn't do anything that would out him as the State of Illinois, as being kidnapped as a human was bad enough, and he shouldn't do anything to make it worse.

Suddenly, the bag was yanked off his head, and Illinois let out a slight hiss of pain as the light hit his eyes. The brightness seemed to make the headache worse, and Illinois briefly closed his eyes until the pain had passed.

"Open your eyes, Illinois, and make this easier for all of us." Illinois heard someone say. He froze, despite his best efforts not to, and his eyes flew open in disbelief. Illinois didn't recognize anyone in the room, but he knew who they were.

They were members of the mob he had joined.

"What—what are you talking about? My name isn't Illinois. I'm human!" Illinois insisted, hoping that whatever made them think he was him could be taken apart and convince them he wasn't Illinois.

"Well, if you are so sure of that, we can always test it this way." The same man said, pulling out a gun and pressing it against Illinois's chest, just about where his heart was. Illinois froze.

If they killed him, they would know. Ilinois couldn't let them—

His thoughts were cut off by blinding pain in his chest before darkness claimed him as Illinois slumped in the chair.

Illinois blinked and opened his eyes, his entire body feeling stiff and hot. Illinois felt panic surge through him as he realized he didn't know where he was. Illinois was surrounded by unfamiliar people, tied to a chair. There was also a weird wet substance on his chest and legs, and the room was filled with the stench of blood.

Illinois looked down and realized there was a hole in his shirt, and his shirt and pants were soaked in wet, sticky blood.

These people killed Illinois. And worse still, behind the man with the gun, Illinois saw another man with a video camera. These assholes killed him and then videoed it? What for?

What did they plan to do with that information? Illinois was slowly coming to the realization that his actions with the mob were backfiring majorly on him. The only people who could have possibly come to that conclusion and decided to prove it with violence were them.

"Well, if I'm Illinois, I'll just leave, and you can't do anything about it," Illinois said, letting a small smug smile grow on his face. He still had the upper hand.

"But you can do something about that. It would be a shame if the entire world discovered what the State of Illinois looked like as a human. I mean, you would never have peace again, not to mention that you couldn't even be with your family without revealing what they look like. And that would truly be unfortunate, wouldn't it, Illinois?" The man with a gun said, waving it around.

"And if you leave, that's what we'll do." The camera guy said. Illinois gulped, trying to hide his anxiety and fear at that.

"But we have an offer for you. If you stay with us, work for us, do whatever we ask, we'll ensure no one sees that little video, and your precious family can be safe." The gunman said. Illinois bowed his head as he tried to consider his options.

He couldn't. He couldn't.

He did petty crime and smuggled booze but tried to avoid doing more than that. He just wanted...he didn't mean...

Illinois was breathing heavily now, trying to avoid panicking. He didn't mean for this to happen, and he didn't want to work for the mob forever. He wanted to go home, he wanted his dad, and he wanted this to all be some terrible dream.

But it wasn't.

Biting down sobs, Illinois knew what his answer had to be. He knew what he had to do if he wanted to protect not only his human face but also his family's.

"Fine," he muttered.

"What was that?" The gunman asked. Illinois scowled.

"I said fine, you fucking bastard. I'll take your deal. Just leave my family out of this." Illinois said. The gunman smiled.

"Good job, Illinois. You made the right choice," he said, patting Illinois' shoulder. Illinois held back the urge to bite him.

"Now, may I leave?" Illinois asked. The gunman grabbed his face.

"One last thing. For insurance." The man said, "Turn back to your state form."

"Why?" Illinois asked, panic in his voice, not wanting to do what they asked.

"You promised to obey. Change back, Illinois. Now." The gunman said, pointing the gun at Illinois' head. Reluctantly, Illinois did what he asked, hissing in pain as his wings were uncomfortably—and painfully pressed against the stiff wooden back of the chair.

Illinois hoped he wasn't stuck like this for long. He knew terrible things could happen if his wings were crammed like this for too long.

"Thank you for being so cooperative, Illinois. It's nice to have good help like you." The gunman laughed. "Now, I presume you know you aren't allowed to go running to Daddy or any of the other states about this to get us all arrested, and if you did, we'd release the video and the photos to the public."

Illinois bit his lip, trying to keep himself from arguing, and nodded weakly. His mind swirled as Illinois realized how bad of a situation he was in. He wished...why did he have to be such an idiot about things?

Suddenly, an arm wrapped around Illinois' neck, pushing a cloth to his face. Illinois struggled against the arm before his horror grew as he realized what was on the fabric.

Ether! Illinois realized as the soaked cloth covered his nose and mouth, the sweet smell ambushing his senses. Illinois tried to pull his head away, but someone held it still.

As his awareness and mobility began fading, Illinois could feel someone stroking their hand through his hair, which just seemed to soothe him in a twisted way. There were also hands picking through his wings. Illinois tried to pull them away but couldn't muster up the strength to do it as his eyes began sliding shut.

By the time Illinois realized that he should try not to breathe in the

ether, it was too late, as his ability to think and do anything faded. His body grew limp, and once more, Illinois was unconscious.

When Illinois woke again, his head was in someone's lap. Illinois, hoping it wasn't one of the members of the mob who had kidnapped him, slowly pried his eyes open, as he realized it was New York.

"York?" Illinois asked, wincing as he realized how dry his throat was. New York smiled, but there was worry in it.

"Hey, Noi. Are you okay?" New York asked. Illinois nodded, remembering what he had been told—what was on the line, before trying to sit up, his head feeling heavy and tired.

"M'good," Illinois said, internally wincing at how slurred his words sounded. New York gave him a look, and Illinois knew his older brother wasn't buying it.

"Well, considering you were passed out on your couch sleeping so deeply that even the damned wouldn't wake you, and you don't smell like you were smoked, I'd say something happened. Ya know, that and the fact that your shirt's covered in dried blood and has a hole it in." Illinois heard Nevada say from the doorway.

Illinois stared down at his shirt, realizing it was the same thing he wore when kidnapped.

"Ready to break it up?" New York asked. Illinois fiddled with his fingers, fear rushing through him as he thought about what to tell his brothers.

But...both of them were involved in the mob. They wouldn't tell anyone if Illinois asked.

And maybe they could help.

So, realizing the sobs he had been holding back, Illinois told them everything.

The Satellite Inspection

Written for my lovely friend SinfullTrashHuman. He's gotten me hyperfixating on the Soviet satellites.

Location: The Satellite Inspection Room, Moscow, Moscow Oblast, Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Date: October 9th, 1951

It was the beginning of another month, which meant that Hungary and the other communist countries allied with the USSR were traveling to Moscow to meet with him for what he called an inspection. They did this on the ninth of every month, although none of them remembered how it started.

Yugoslavia used to be a member of this group but left. That made the USSR very upset, and their inspections after that had been less focused on their physical condition and more on their mental condition.

This one was a physical inspection, which is the kind Hungary preferred. Mental inspections made his head hurt and often left him dazed and confused. The USSR said that that was normal and not to worry about it, so Hungary didn't worry.

Right now, the other countries and Hungary were lined up as the USSR explained the rules of today's little contests.

And please, my children, remember to behave. I don't want to deal with any harmful behavior," the USSR said. Hungary nodded at his words.

"Don't worry, Mother. We'll behave." Hungary heard Albania mutter as he almost hissed out the word mother. The USSR turned around quickly, his eyes showing extreme anger. Hungary froze, fear running down his spine as he knew what would happen to Albania and the rest of them.

"Who said that?" the USSR hissed. Everyone stayed silent and still. Then, it happened.

Hungary gritted his teeth as his fa—as the USSR's power slammed into his brain, slowly seizing control. The forceful seizure was excruciating, which is most likely what he wanted. Hungary refused to show pain, knowing that it was not allowed. He knew one of them would give in eventually and rat out the country that had hissed out the word.

Then, out of the corner of Hungary's eye, he saw Poland straighten, and without seeing his face, Hungary knew his eyes were empty. It was the man's curse. Being born as a puppet left his mind weaker to the USSR's and made it harder for him to resist his control. Hungary was one of the few who lasted longer against the pain.

"Albania called you mother, my father," He muttered blankly. Hungary barely had time to feel sorry for Albania before his mind succumbed to his father's will.

Hungary stiffened, shaking away the unneeded thoughts he could barely remember. Hungary knew Albania, his brother, had been the one to hiss out that offending word at their father.

"Grab him!" Their father barked in their family's shared language. As Hungary stood next to his brother, he grabbed Albania's shoulder and arm, as his sister, East Germany, grabbed the other. Albania squirmed in their grip, but Отец placed a hand on his forehead, and Albania slowly calmed. Отец removed his hand, revealing Albania's now dazed face.

"You can let him go now," Отец said, much more calmly this time. East Germany and Hungary did as he commanded, and Albania sank to his knees.

"This was just supposed to be a physical inspection. But now you're making me do this. Mongolia, my daughter, be a dear and take Albania to the other room, would you?" Отец asked. The country nodded.

"I will Аав." She said, lifting Albania, who walked like a newborn

horse, shaky and unstable. Hungary wished he hadn't spoken against Отец, then that never would have happened to him. Her hooves clicked sharply against the ground, and Albania was lucky that his limp wings were not in the way.

"Now, for the rest of you, I'm sure I can find some nice films for you to watch while I inspect Albania. However, since Albania spoke out like this, I'll need to check up on the rest of you first to ensure that no one else is in the process of being corrupted by capitalists. I'll start with the one I feel is in the most danger: Hungary. So everyone go to your rooms, and Hungary, follow me," Отец said, walking off towards the direction of Hungary's room.

Hungary followed him, still making sure to keep his posture. But despite the fact that he knew it shouldn't, his mind kept wandering back to Albania. There was something bad in the room Albania had been put in, Hungary thought. He knew he had been in there before, but he couldn't remember why or what was there.

Maybe that should have concerned Hungary, but he knew that Отец cared too much about their well-being to let anything bad happen or do anything terrible to them. He always talked about how he wanted to make sure they didn't end up like Hungary's estranged sister, Austria.

Отец opened the door to Hungary's room, and the satellite obediently walked inside. The room was sparsely decorated, although there were some posters that Отец had given Hungary that were dotted across the walls. Hungary sat on the bed, hands on his knees, and faced his father.

"You struggle too much. It's so hard to get you under my control because, for some odd reason, you struggle against it. This is a bad thing and can lead to you being harmed in the future, something I really don't want to happen. Do you know why it is happening constantly?" Отец asked.

"No Отец, I don't. I know that being a communist is why I am a civilized country, so I can't imagine why I wouldn't want to be working with you. The only reason I can think of is that there are too many of my people who don't like communists." Hungary said,

his voice blank. Отец nodded, looking smug. Or maybe happy. It was hard to read his face.

"The people who live in your land but aren't communist, you really shouldn't be calling your people. They are hurting you, trying to damage our relationship and turn you into the same kind of country the Kingdom of Hungary was. They don't want you to be an advanced nation. Why claim them as yours?" Отец said. Отец made a point, but some parts of his claims concerned Hungary.

"But..." Hungary muttered, trailing off. Отец looked upset at that.

"But what, Hungary?" He asked, causing a brief flash of cold and pain through the satellite's head. Hungary lowered his head somewhat and shook it in an attempt to dislodge the feeling.

"Nothing Отец. You are always right. I will no longer call them my people and ignore their influence on me." Hungary said. Why was he trying to question Отец? He was much older and wiser and had more experience dealing with ignorant, rebellious people. He was Hungary's father, after all. Отец smiled at this, and the cold and pain finally ended, leaving behind a calm feeling.

"Good job Hungary. I was worried you would be a lot more corrupted, but I'm glad you were barely being negatively influenced. It makes me so happy to see you safe like this." Отец said, patting his shoulder. Hungary nodded.

"Thank you Отец for always looking out for me," Hungary said.

"It's my job, after all. Now, I need to check up on the rest of your siblings, so why don't you just relax here while I take care of them? Then I can get that movie for you while I de-corrupt Albania," Отец said before leaving Hungary's room, the door locking shut behind him.

Soon after that, Hungary felt like a weight had been removed from his head. Hungary groaned, rubbing at his forehead, where the achy pain was. The USSR's presence in his mind always gave Hungary a bit of a headache. Hungary knew—he thinks the USSR was just concerned, but his power over it was invasive. However, the USSR

only had that kind of power over a few countries, mainly Hungary, Eastern Europe, Mongolia, and all the countries that made up his Union.

According to him, capitalist countries like the USA, France, and Britain all had similar degrees of control over the smaller capitalist countries, so it's not like it's uncommon.

Although...some days, Hungary had trouble believing that. He tried to push away those traitorous thoughts quickly. Sometimes, it felt as if the USSR could read his mind. Hungary didn't want to end up like Albania. Besides, the inspection for Hungary, it seemed, was over. Hungary was disappointed he didn't get to compete against his fellow communists in the little games the USSR always set up.

Those were the most fun parts of these inspections, especially when Hungary beat Romania. Sure, they were to prove to the USSR that they were staying fit and good soldiers, but the contests were fun and never really felt like tests.

Even East Germany, Mongolia, and Czechoslovakia were allowed to compete alongside them, and they were women. Although, frankly, East Germany could be pretty scary sometimes, as she was freakishly strong.

Some part of Hungary wasn't always happy with him coming to Moscow on the ninth of each month, but Hungary ignored it. Sure, something the USSR was a bit pushy, and his power was invasive, but Hungary still had his free will, and he wanted to be a communist.

Right?

Becoming a Satellite

Unofficially requested by SinfullTrashHuman

Magyarország would never admit this to anyone. Never. No matter how hard someone pried at his life, he would not admit that he was scared. Magyarország knew that the USSR had been up to something involving his government, and he knew that something terrible might happen. However, none of the USSR's attempts to make Magyarország communist worked, so Magyarország just laughed him off.

But then, the USSR stopped hiding his intentions.

And now Magyarország knew he was in deep trouble. Lucky for him, he wasn't ending up like the Baltics. Instead, he was just getting a government change. It wasn't good, as Magyarország's people didn't want said government, but it would work out. It wouldn't be that hard to get rid of an unwanted government, so Magyarország would just have to deal with this bullshit for now.

So now here Magyarország was, in his office, trying to keep his cool.

"Я знаю, что ты там." (I know you are there.) Magyarország suddenly heard through his office door. He quickly grabbed a pair of scissors off his desk, holding them as you would a knife. Magyarország knew that voice. Why was the USSR here?

"Fuck off!" Magyarország yelled back. There was silence for a moment.

"Что?" (What?) Magyarország heard the USSR say. Magyarország scowled in annoyance. It figures the bastard didn't even bother to learn his language before messing with him and his government.

Magyarország marched angrily to the door and yanked it open, scissors still held tightly in his hand.

"Я сказал отвали. Оставь меня в покое." (I said fuck off. Leave me the hell alone) Magyarország said. The USSR shook his head.

"Боюсь, я не могу. Я здесь по важным деловым вопросам." (I'm afraid I can't. I'm here on important business matters.) the USSR said, reaching out a hand for Magyarország's face. He was tempted to stab the USSR but decided to try diplomacy before assault.

So Magyarország took a step back and shook his head.

"Во-первых, мне все равно. Во-вторых, кем, черт возьми, ты себя возомнил, пытающимся прикоснуться ко мне без разрешения?" (One, I don't care. Two, who the hell do you think you are, trying to touch me without permission?) Magyarország accused angrily.

Then, before Magyarország could react, the USSR surged forward, his tall body clearing the space between them in seconds. One of his massive hands clasped Magyarország's arm, holding the scissors, while the other came to gently rest on his cheek.

"Hey! What the fuck do you think you—" Magyarország was suddenly cut off by an odd feeling in his head.

It felt like the feeling of cool water running down Magyarország's head, but instead, it was in his brain, making his head feel...fuzzy. A feeling Ве́нгрия couldn't begin to describe. But it made him calm, and Ве́нгрия relaxed some, leaning into the hand on his cheek as the scissors fell out of his hand.

"There we go, my son. Is that better?" Ве́нгрия heard the USSR say. Magyarország jerked away.

"Fiú? nem vagyok a te..." (Son? I'm not your–) Magyarország cut himself off as the USSR raised a hand, causing the unnatural calm to return. Ве́нгрия didn't like this. His language felt foreign on his tongue, and some part of him was...was...

Ве́нгрия's head was hurting along the same area where the cool feeling was. Magyarország tried to fight back against the feeling, toes curling as he did so. He knew it was doing something to him,

but everything happening in his head made it hard to focus.

"Stubborn, are we? No matter. The pain will end soon enough. Just relax, Hungary," The USSR said. Magyarország didn't want to relax because something felt very wrong about it. Yet his body became more limp, and his knees gave out.

Ве́нгрия collapsed, and the USSR caught him. Magyarország tried to pull himself out of the USSR's grip, but the grip was too tight. His hand was running through Magyarország's hair. Magyarország felt disgusted and scared, but it was getting harder and harder to fight against anything.

His eyes slid shut, and the massive hands holding him still seemed to tighten their grip, causing small amounts of pain to run through his arms. But that seemed to matter little, and everything continued to fade away as the cold overtook his mind.

Then—

Ве́нгрия blinked his eyes open, yawning as he did so. Ве́нгрия didn't recognize the bedroom he was in. His head was aching, and his thoughts felt drifty. Logically, he knew he should be panicking, but he just couldn't bring himself to feel that way.

Suddenly, the door opened, and a familiar figure walked in. Ве́нгрия's eyes widened as he recognized the tall red figure of the USSR.

"USS—" Ве́нгрия began but was cut off by the USSR raising his hand, which somehow seemed to take away Ве́нгрия's ability to speak. But then, the pain in Ве́нгрия's head grew.

Why wasn't Ве́нгрия calling the USSR his father? The USSR was his father, having adopted Ве́нгрия to help him modernize his country. That's why Ве́нгрия became communist.

But somet—

The cold and pain returned, and the thought faded. Ве́нгрия groaned, hand going to his forehead to rub at it.

"Don't worry, Hungary, the headaches will go away soon. They are just a side effect of your modernizing and being freed from the undeveloped capitalists. Some people are upset about it and causing you some pain. That's why you passed out earlier, don't you remember?" Отец said. Ве́нгрия shook his head, trying to piece together the fuzzy half-remembered details.

What had happened?

Ве́нгрия opened his mouth to voice the question but was cut off again by his father.

"Don't think too much. It'll worsen the headache. But if you want something to do, how about thanking me for freeing you?" Отец asked, a smile on his face. Ве́нгрия nodded numbly at that.

"Thank you for freeing me Отец," Ве́нгрия said. Отец's hand ran through Ве́нгрия's hair as a wider smile grew on his face.

"It was my pleasure, Hungary."

An Unwilling Reunion

1822 Haitian Annexation of the Dominican Republic requested by PeachDraws. Small reminder that this Haiti is not modern day Haiti, this Haiti is the republic that existed from 1806–1849. Just to make sure y'all are aware.

Also anything in bold is Spanish

The Spanish Empire was well known in Haiti's continent as ruthless, cruel, and a terrible father. So when his colonies started rebelling, Haiti couldn't say he was too upset. Watching his empire in the Americas fall apart around him as his colonies began to follow in the footsteps of the United States and Haiti was wonderful.

Haiti's neighbor had even joined in, as the Captaincy General of Santo Domingo, who had recently been killed and replaced by her son, the Republic of Spanish Haiti. It was wonderful, not being bordered by a colony that could be used by an empire to invade him, especially after Haiti had just spent the past few years divided into two nations.

However, Haiti was still worried that Spanish Empire, in his rage and embarrassment, would attempt to reconquer Spanish Haiti. Luckily, Haiti had a plan to help prevent that. By protecting Spanish Haiti and his people, Haiti could ensure that they would never become slaves to the Spanish again!

Haiti expected that protecting his neighbor would come with complaints from their former colonizers, but he never thought he would have to argue with Spanish Haiti over his protection.

"You can't do this. This is illegal! It violates treaties and my rights as a country!" Spanish Haiti insisted. Haiti shook his head and sighed. Why didn't he get it? Why didn't he see that this was the best option for them and their people?

"I know you think that, but trust me, I'm doing this for the

betterment of both our people. We are stronger as a united nation." Haiti said, trying to make him see sense. Spanish Haiti practically snarled at him, the expression forcing the stars bridging his nose to almost bunch up.

"I don't want to be a united nation! Especially one that is governed by *you!*" he said, his anger most likely blinding his judgment. Haiti couldn't really blame him. Spanish Haiti was very young, and the younger people were always more afraid of change than they seemed. Haiti was sure that once Spanish Haiti passed on, he would look down from heaven and be happy and proud of their nation.

Haiti should make sure Spanish Haiti gets a memorial so their people will know how Spanish Haiti gave his life to protect them from the Spanish enslavers.

"Come on, Spanish Haiti. I know you are young, only a few months, but you have to see the benefits of our union." Haiti said, trying to reason with him. Haiti didn't want to have to hurt him, especially since he won't have much longer to live.

"How are you so sure you aren't the one making a mistake?" Spanish Haiti said, meeting Haiti's eyes. Haiti scowled, trying to remind himself that this poor man was just naïve and could be reasoned with, no matter how frustrating he was making it.

"Because I have the experience of knowing what happens when division plagues our lovely island," Haiti said, in reference to his time spent divided. Haiti had experience with this, and this child was acting like he was born yesterday. Spanish Haiti snorted, and Haiti pushed down the frustrated emotions that were rising.

This stupid child. Why couldn't he just see what was right in front of him? Haiti was giving him a solution to his problems, an ally, protection! He refused to see that, a surefire sign that he had the same stubbornness as his mother.

"Your county was divided. Mine was fine." Spanish Haiti said, his eyes staring into Haiti's as a smug smile made its way across his face.

Haiti was glad, at this moment, that he wasn't a father. He doesn't think he could handle dealing with brats like this.

"It wasn't even yours! It belonged to that bastard, Santo Domingo, and his stupid empire! It was still a colony enslaved to the Spanish Empire! I'm trying to ensure we are free and our people won't be colonies anymore!" Haiti practically yelled. Why didn't he understand? Why didn't he get it?

"By colonizing me?" Spanish Haiti asked, raising an eyebrow, "**You really didn't think this through.**"

The accusation stung and caused many emotions to swirl simultaneously through Haiti's body. Rage, frustration, disbelief, horror, and many more he couldn't identify.

"I'm not colonizing you; I'm helping you!" Haiti protested. He wasn't like the long-dead Kingdom of France, the Spanish Empire, Britain, England, or any of them.

"Funny. The Spanish and French Kingdoms said the same thing when they colonized us. What makes you better?" Spanish Haiti said, his eyes hardening, no longer whining like the child he was, but speaking confidently, like a proper country. He was challenging Haiti, that much was clear, and probably summoning all the bravado he had in the process.

It was a noble effort. It would be a shame to see him go so determined to protect his people, yet not in the one way that mattered the most, the one way that could protect them forever.

"I am genuinely doing it out of love for our island and for our people," Haiti explained. Spanish Haiti snorted.

"Sure, you are. But sometimes people don't want your help," he said. Haiti rolled his eyes and waved his hand dismissively.

"I'm confident your people do, even if you are too blinded by your fear of death to see that," Haiti said.

"I am my people, first and foremost. I don't stand for this because they don't stand for this. And even if I die, even if I don't live past

today, my spirit will. My people fought and won against Spain. And maybe it'll take years, but they'll fight and win against you, too. I am not French, nor are you, Republic of Haiti. I am a Spanish speaker and a son of that part of Europe. You and I are not the same, and I know what happens when someone who is different takes control."

"I am not like that."

"A fact you only claim but do not prove. You're just as bad as the rest of them. Even now, I'm just a prisoner, despite your claims of protection." Spanish Haiti said, raising his handcuffed hands.

"You tried to kill me."

"And I wish I succeeded. If not for my sake but my people's sake."

The Fire Pokémon Club

Happy very belated birthday to ApeculiarChild2 and Horror7469. This oneshot is for y'all.

"Does she even have the power to call a meeting? I mean, she's only a state." Celtic League asked her father as they walked towards the meeting room that they and two others had been called into by Hawai'i.

"But she is a former country, Yr Undeb Geltaidd, just like Llydaw and Cernyw, and they can call meetings."

"Yeah, but only for organizations they are a part of." Celtic League protested

"Sometimes I forget how young you are, and then you say things like that," Wales commented, causing their daughter to give them a fondly exasperated look.

"Do I want to know what they did?" She asked.

"No. No, you do not." Wales responded, "Besides, you are an organization made up of former colonies, intending to preserve our cultures and languages, which almost died out. You, of all people, should be more sympathetic to Hawaii. Her native peoples have suffered similar plights to my own and the other Celtics."

"So I've heard..." Celtic League muttered.

"Oh, come on, my beloved nizez. You know that Iwerzhon just has a lot of friends." Brittany, another country invited, said as she practically skipped to join the duo.

"And kids," Wales muttered.

"And kids, and besides, he's a storyteller at heart. Of course, he is constantly talking about them." Brittany added. Celtic League huffed.

"I know, I know. I don't need a lecture," she said as she approached the room's door, nearly shoving it open. Wales and Brittany exchanged looks with a small smile before they followed her in.

Inside the room, they saw two other nations, the American State and Former Kingdom of Hawai‘i, the person who invited them there, and the Republic of Malta, who waved as they entered, looking relieved to see them.

"Hello, Wales," Malta said, as he was the only one in the group she was familiar with.

"Heya Malta. How are you?" Wales responded with the friendliest smile he could muster.

"I'm confused as to why I'm here, if I'm being honest," Malta said, turning to Hawai‘i.

"I would also like an explanation, Hawaii," Celtic League said. Hawai‘i smiled as she spread out her arms.

"I have invited you all here for a very special reason—"

"Murdering my brother?" Celtic League asked, causing her father to shoot her a glare as she brought up information he and England had been trying to bury for a long time. Hawai‘i shook her head.

"Unfortunately, no, I've been banned from causing international diplomatic incidents for the next three years after that trouble in Paris," Hawai‘i said with a dramatic sign.

"Oh, come on, that was funny," Wales said with a laugh as he remembered exactly what Hawai‘i was talking about.

"And you can't say Bro-C'hall didn't deserve it," Brittany added.

"Oh, I agree there. Unfortunately, America can't let me get away with things like that, and his government was very insistent he punish me because apparently 'international diplomatic incidents are bad' or whatever," Hawai‘i said, making air quotes as she explained.

"So what was the punishment?" Brittany asked, her voice playful.

"He said some of the tourists from the mainland were punishment enough and then passed out for twelve hours," Hawai‘i said, prompting a startled laugh out of Wales.

"Is that normal for him?" Malta asked, still looking uncomfortable.

"Yep. He's a workaholic insomniac sometimes." Hawai‘i said before clapping her hands together, "Anyways, let's get back on track. So, the reason why I've invited you all here is because it's come to my attention, via Massachusetts bitching to me at three am, that we all have the ability to create fire."

"I see where this is going, and I'm excited," Celtic League said with a wide grin.

"Yr Undeb Geltaidd, shouldn't you be the one advocating against arson most?" Wales asked his daughter. Celtic League snorted and waved her hand dismissively.

"You've let me spend too much time with Moereb Breizh. I've been corrupted, and there's nothing you can do to stop it," she said, causing Brittany to give Wales a triumphant grin.

"I wasn't advocating arson—"

"Who are you, and what have you done with Hawaii?" Wales asked, earning him the middle finger from said state.

"But I was going to propose, like, a club for us with fire abilities so we can just fuck around with them. We are all fireproof, right?" Hawai‘i asked, looking around the small group of nations.

"I'm not." Malta said, "The horse features canceled it out."

"Malta, you can hold the fire extinguisher then," Brittany said, walking over to the fire extinguisher in the wall.

"Don't steal that," Wales said halfheartedly.

"Don't tell me what to do, Kembre." She snapped back but backed

away from the fire extinguisher anyway.

"Where would we do this anyway? Because all of us together seems like a massive fire hazard." Malta cut in.

"Fire hazards are fun." Wales said blankly, causing his daughter to smack his head, "Ow!"

"No!" She snapped, "I'm not dealing with that bullshit from you today."

"It was one time!" Wales protested, rubbing at his head.

"You burnt down my fucking house!" Celtic League said, throwing her hands in the air.

"I didn't know you had a gas fireplace like a heathen!"

"Rydych chi wedi marw i mi." (You're dead to me,) Celtic League said, causing Wales to gasp and clutch at their chest like an overdramatic Victorian maiden.

"Dy dad dy hun?" (Your own father?)

"Fe wnaethoch chi losgi fy nhŷ i lawr!" (You burned down my house!) Celtic League yelled.

"Not that this isn't exciting or whatever, but can you save your little familial spat for later?" Brittany asked.

"You're literally my aunt," Celtic League said, turning to Britanny, which caused Hawai‘i to laugh.

"What?" Brittany asked, looking towards Hawai‘i, who just waved her hand dismissively.

"Don't worry about it. You just remind me of my family." Hawai‘i explained.

"I can't tell if that's a compliment or an insult," Britanny commented. Hawai‘i shrugged.

"Neither can I. Anyways, are you guys down for it? I...I miss being able to interact with people outside of my families." Hawai'i.

"Sounds fun. And maybe I'll get yelled at less for setting things on fire." Wales said, causing his daughter to give him an exasperated look.

"I'm only looking because someone has to supervise all of you." Celtic League commented.

"I thought we decided that Malta's job was to do that. Also, you are a literal child," Brittany said.

"And yet I'm more mature."

"That's because you haven't been relentlessly traumatized yet. Give it time."

"Fuck you."

"You know what, maybe burning down your house wasn't an accident."

"TAD I WILL FUCKING KILL YOU!"

The Discovery of a Kindred Spirit

Skullyville, Oklahoma
March 23, 1847

Logically, Choctaw knew he was not alone in his suffering. There were thousands of other indigenous peoples in this land, from his family to his enemies, all of whom had been experiencing the disease, discrimination, and violence brought over by the new personifications from across the sea.

Choctaw thought they were all the same kind of people, people who took what was not theirs. They could never have enough because they were still young and feared death. They were people who saw anything that wasn't them as different and wrong.

They made far too many assumptions. It would probably get them killed.

It was not that Choctaw was claiming to be a perfect man. He knew he had done great wrongs before, and he wasn't free from making assumptions either.

After all, he presumed all Europeans were like France and England.

He didn't realize that one of them had been going through the same struggles he had.

Ireland was not an unfamiliar name to him. He had heard of him before, someone who was part of England's empire. Someone who he presumed supported what England was doing, that he was a loyal and willing member of a plague on the world. After all, he had seen many people who claimed Irish blood hurt him and his people, including the bastard who forced him off his land, Andrew Jackson.

But what he was hearing now painted a different story. A story that

reflected his own.

A story of an indigenous personification who was colonized by an English-speaking white Christian who couldn't care less about what you went through, who just wanted you gone and replaced with more of his people. A person who thought your very existence was a crime and saw the deaths of your people as a good thing.

A person who wanted your culture gone and for you to fade away as your people become theirs. A person who, even if they didn't say it, even if they denied it, was wishing for your death.

Ireland's story wasn't like England's. It was like his own.

"We are providing aid," Choctaw said as he approached William Armstrong, the man collecting the donations to help relieve Ireland's suffering. A kind of suffering that Choctaw most certainly could say was worse than anyone thought. After all, no one ever seemed to think the pain he went through on that Trail of Death was as bad as he said. Although no white people ever seemed to believe what he said.

"I know we don't have a lot...but—"

William cut Choctaw off, smiling, "I'm glad that the Christian faith remains strong in you Indians."

"I'm not doing this because some of my people follow your faith. I'm doing this because it is the right thing to do, and aid is something that I wished I had when I was forced onto this territory when your president made me leave my home despite the treaties I had with America and your court telling your president not to." Choctaw responded, his voice even as he made eye contact with William, who looked less happy.

He probably wanted Choctaw to claim that it was Christianity and the lessons from it that made him want to help, as no one ever seemed to think that he had kindness before the people who invaded his land and killed his people taught him and his people about their religion. They never seem to understand that it had always been a part of his culture to be generous. Even if his people

were warriors, they were also kind and generous souls.

You didn't have to be Christian to be that.

"I don't think we need to discuss prior issues right now. You did say you were going to help, right? Why don't I collect your people's donations so we can both be on our way and not start silly arguments?" William said, almost talking down to him like Choctaw wasn't centuries old.

Humans. Whether they were his people or not, Choctaw don't think he would ever understand them.

Then again, he's sure they felt the same about him and his kind. Although the humans from Europe always seemed to revere their countryhumans more than anyone Choctaw had ever met here, it was an odd phenomenon.

Suppressing his urge to lecture William, Choctaw passed over his people's donation. It wasn't a lot, barely a hundred seventy dollars, but it was all they could spare. He hoped that even with the small amount, it would be able to help Ireland if it was just a little.

A little bit of help is better than nothing, and doing nothing about what was happening to Ireland, after all, Choctaw has seen and been through...

Choctaw doesn't think he would have been able to accept or forgive himself if he did that.

India Gets Revenge

Happy birthday decaying_blossoms

"Wales, what exactly am I looking at here?" India asked as she looked down at the food that had been placed in front of her.

"It's supposed to be curry," The Celtic Nation said with a slight, pained grin as if they knew exactly what would happen.

"It looks like someone vomited on my plate," India said, poking it with her fork.

"Don't worry. That's what all his food looks like. It's best just to pretend like you're eating it and then go out to eat after we leave. That's what I always do," Wales said as he leaped onto the back of the chair beside her.

"I don't trust his restaurants," India said. She had been forced into some of them before, and the less said about those experiences, the better.

"Don't worry, I know some that are not owned by white people trying to claim curry was invented by Lloegr."

"The people who *what*?"

"I mean, if you could understand what he was saying, you'd see England is doing that right now," Wales said, his smile growing into something a bit more vicious, as if he was well aware of the wrath he was about to release onto his egotistical neighbor.

"He doesn't even use spices! What do you mean he and his people try to claim he invented curry?" India said as she tightened her grip on the fork. Why did she keep coming here? Surely, diplomacy wasn't worth this.

"Apparently, it's a traditional English dish," Wales said in a bored tone, "Cornwall has a sword if you need it, India."

"He's too pathetic to use a sword on. The fork will do." India said as she stood up.

"Well, you're another person to add to the 'stabbed England with a fork' list," Wales said, pulling out his phone. Although she was curious about who else was on that list, India resolved to ask Wales about it later and focus on stabbing England with the fork first.

"England!" India barked as she approached the shorter man, kneeing him in the balls and then stabbing him in the shoulder with the fork as he collapsed, "You and your people better stop claiming that curry is yours before I stab you with a real weapon next time."

Camping is Deadly

Requested by LikeAPro42

In hindsight, accepting an invitation from Florida to go on a camping trip wasn't the best idea. But Mississippi was bored, and a break from her government had sounded wonderful. Now, she was wondering if it was too late to escape.

"¿Por qué hizo empezar un fuego, Puerto Rico?" (Why did you start a fire Puerto Rico?) Florida yelled as he began stamping out the flames slowly spreading towards the tents.

"Yo pensé *muy* divertido." (I thought it was *very* funny) Puerto Rico snapped back sarcastically, looking like he wanted to beat Florida over the head with his wooden spoon, his ears pulled back against his wooly hair, his teeth bared. Of course, that wasn't as intimidating as Puerto Rico probably wanted it to be, considering he wasn't lucky enough to get fangs.

It was, however, very adorable.

"I'm surprised it took us this long to get to arson," Georgia commented, watching the scene with amusement.

"It's not arson if it's an accident!" Puerto Rico yelled back.

"But wasss it an asssident?" Alabama asked.

"Cállate, snake boy." Puerto Rico snapped, throwing the spoon at Alabama. Alabama ducked, but Louisana caught the spoon.

"Now, frær, if you had broken one of my good spoons, I would have kicked your ass. You decided to have me make soupé, and I will ban you from eating my food till you get me a new one." Louisiana said.

"No, lo siento, Ana. Por favor, don't make me eat Rida's cooking." Puerto Rico begged, getting on his knees.

"Rude! I never sent you to the hospital!" Florida said, knocking his elbow into Puerto Rico's head.

"Yeah, 'cause I don't go to hospitals anymore, bruto." Puerto Rico argued, "Not since that hijo de puta Rhoads."

"That's gonna get ya killed one day, piti," Louisiana commented as Puerto Rico stood up, repeatedly jabbing his elbow toward Florida. Upon hearing Louisiana's comment, his face seemed to fall slightly.

"Hasn't gotten me killed yet." Puerto Rico muttered quietly, crossing his arms. Georgia went to stand beside him, bumping their shoulders together as a sign of comfort. Puerto Rico shot her a small smile.

"Ah, the mindset of a true American." Mississippi commented, trying to break the tension, causing Puerto Rico to flip her off, "Oh come on, that was a compliment!"

"Can I get unadopted now? I'll go be a recluse on my island and kidnap a bunch of people's kids like Wai." Puerto Rico sighed. Florida snorted.

"Lo siento, hermanito. You're stuck with us until the end times." Florida said, throwing an arm around Puerto Rico.

"Sweet, I'll be free next week." Puerto Rico said, causing Louisana to point her spoon at him.

"Piti, get that attitude out of my kitchen." They threatened, causing amused laughter to ripple through the group.

"Lou, it's bumfuck nowhere, Florida," Alabama said, "Lassst time we were here, we all had to go to the hossspital after Rida made us food. Assside from Richard, who doesssn't want to care about hisss health."

"Rida gave you poisonous berries. I am making food, and you will respect me." Louisiana said, ignoring Puerto Rico's complaints that he did get medical attention.

"They weren't poisonous. Y'all are just cowards," Florida argued,

prompting Georgia to elbow him sharply in the ribs.

"Why did I let Florida talk me into this again?" Mississippi murmured.

"I don't know why you did, but Rida bribed me with Louis' cooking." Puerto Rico said, gaining nods of agreement from everyone aside from Louisiana.

"High praise from my siblings, but also, ouch, Flor, am I just a bargaining chip to you?" Louisiana asked, hand over their heart.

"Yeah, pretty much," Florida answered, no emotion in his voice,

"There's a joke to be had about our biological father there." Puerto Rico said.

"Quiet, or you're going in the swamp."

"Oh no, the swamp, so scary. I'm gonna see snakes and bugs!" Puerto Rico snarked back.

"Well, maybe if you're lucky, you'll see Shrek," Mississippi said, crossing her arms.

"Please, Shrek has standards. Why would he be in Florida?" Puerto Rico asked.

"*¡Me cansé!* El tiempo de pantano." (*That's it!* Swamp time.) Florida said, rushing at Puerto Rico, who dodged, blew a raspberry at Florida, then vanished, "¡Hijo de puta!"

"Well, at leassst there were no casssualtiesss thisss time."

When a Land Lacks a Host

Circa 1945, Allied-Occupied Germany

America felt the moment Germany died without warning, as the land under his feet seemed to open up and leave a void. America took a few startled steps back, trying to ignore how the void feeling tugged at his soul.

America had never heard of or felt anything like this. Was this just another unique thing to come out of WW2? Nations had died before, as is the nature of all things, but America had never been in a place utterly devoid of a countryhuman, as the new one was always created just before or during the death of the old one.

Even though the German States still existed, since America and his allies were not taking Germany's land for themselves, even though the land had states, it had no countryhuman. It was countryless.

Was that what that feeling was, countryless land reaching out, trying to find or make a countryhuman to hold its essence?

Countryless land was rare, and it would make sense that no one knew about the feeling of the void.

"Hey, Father, you alright? You look like you're gonna puke." America heard Massachusetts say, his hand landing on America's shoulder.

"Sorry. The land feels...empty now...but somewhat needy. I think it's the lack of a countryhuman here." America explained. Massachusetts gave him a weird look.

"I don't feel whatever you're feeling, Pops. Sure you don't need sleep?"

"I don't need more sleep! But if you can't feel it, but I can, then maybe it really is Germany's old land looking for a countryhuman."

America muttered, although loud enough so Massachusetts could still hear him.

"Is that what that feeling is?" America heard Soviet's voice from behind him ask. America nodded before shrugging.

"I think so. I've never felt anything like it, but that's the most logical conclusion I can come to." America explained.

"And your states can't feel it?" Soviet asked. America shook his head.

"No, that's why I think it's a country thing. You can ask your subdivisions if they can feel it, though, if you want to verify that theory." America said. Soviet nodded.

"I might...empty land...I don't like that feeling." Soviet said. America snorted, realizing that his hand had been resting over his heart, as America put more effort than it should have taken to return his hand to his side.

"Me neither. I'm much more grateful that my government is now sending me to the Pacific front. I do not want to be here for much longer."

"Good luck on your front there," Soviet said before nodding politely to Massachusetts and walking back towards his troops.

"I don't like him," Massachusetts said. America snorted in amusement.

"You don't like most people. Besides, you don't have to like him. You just have to be willing to work with him."

"He won't let the Baltics go! That land was annexed illegally and–"

"I'm working on that Mass. Just...we have bigger concerns." Like the emptiness clawing at his soul, begging for something to fill it– begging, begging, begging, *begging*–

"Father?"

'America?'

The land was asking. *It was begging.*

Need need need need.

'No, he's not yours!'

It was like the headaches he always got when he was younger, except instead of in his head, it was in his soul.

And yet, the empty feeling could never entirely consume him, as some warm and familiar seemed to fight back against it.

Mine mine mine mine.

"FATHER!"

America inhaled sharply as his eyes flew open (when did they close?), Massachusetts' concerned voice ringing in his ears.

"Father, are you alright? You look pale." Massachusetts asked. America nodded numbly.

"I'm...fine. Just a bit disorientated. I'm sure it'll lessen at some point." he said with a slight smile. Massachusetts still looked worried.

"Are you sure?"

No.

"Of course I am."

The Frozen State [Non-Canon]

This was co-written with a good friend of mine, NewLostIslands . This was originally her oneshot, but she was having trouble writing it, and I didn't want to let it be abandoned, as I really loved the premise and what she had written so far. So, it was her idea, and she wrote a good chunk of it. I just made it a cohesive thing.

I should've known better, seen the warning signs, and docked when possible. Or just never left the shore at all. But it'd been a gentle east wind and a beautiful day, and I'd naively thought I could handle whatever the Big Lake threw at me.

I cursed myself for that. One of these days, thinking that way would get me killed. The lake changed too quickly to be underestimated like that.

It was too dark and foggy to see the coastline. The wind whipped around so loudly I could barely hear the motor; my jaw ached from keeping it clamped shut. I could only use my own judgment and familiarity with the area to guess where I was. I hoped the shore wasn't too close. If I was correct in guessing, the jagged sandstone cliffs would destroy my boat ages before I got to land safely.

The best idea would be to go a little further to where I knew a small bay was and attempt to land there. After landing, I'd leave and go back home, where I could change into a dry set of clothes and complain to Illinois about my ruined evening.

The thoughts did little to distract from the biting cold. The frozen rain felt more like sleet, my skin and hands stinging from the temperature and ice spray. I was half tempted just to leave now and abandon my motorboat and belongings to the mercy of Lake Superior before I went completely stiff.

A shape loomed out of the fog that I, unfortunately, recognized: a half-fallen tree barely hanging onto the cliffs. My heart sank at the

sight.

"*No, no, no, no, no, no, no,*" I said, fear spiking. "It's too far- I'm past it." I spun around, looking behind to see what I missed. This situation was suddenly a lot worse than I'd thought.

Turning around now would be a lot harder than going forward.

"No worries," I forced a sigh, trying and failing to calm myself. I could barely hear my voice through the storm, but it was easier than thinking. "I know where I am; been in worse places than this and made it out all right."

I just needed to figure out a way to reorganize myself and-

My eyes widened when I saw what was in my way: a giant wave, already whitecapping. Before I could think, it'd hit my boat and tilted her side against the waves, suddenly exposed in the open water. I cursed. I needed to move before the boat could capsize.

Before I could do that, another sudden wave hit me, splashing over the side and somehow drenching my already-soaked clothes worse than they'd been before, The cold feeling like needles jabbing deep into my skin. There wasn't time to worry about that; an enormous third wave was already bearing down on me.

My mind blanked, staring up in shock at the wall of water in front of me. There was a lurch of the boat as it started climbing up the wave.

I should've expected it to be that cold, considering I'd been breathing the lake for the last half hour, But being in the water somehow made it worse. The pain felt like a frozen fire I couldn't escape. Kicking upward, I barely managed to break the surface and get a breath of air.

The last thing I saw was my boat rise above as the wave flipped over. The cold of the second largest lake in the world made my clothes and feathers feel like an iron weight chained around me, trying to drag me down into its depths, seeping the little remaining warmth out. Something metal slammed into my head, and

everything went dark.

—----------

Everything hurt, But hopefully, that meant I wasn't dead yet. My limbs could've been made of stone just from how cold, numb, and stiff they felt. My head spun as I tried to focus and understand what I was seeing and hearing.

Voices seemed to echo distantly; a bright light from somewhere hurt my eyes. I winced. Everything felt too sharp.

"He's awake!"

"*Get away from there. You're going to burn him!"*

"*Someone go get Dad!"*

A face I vaguely recognized as my brother's seemed to swirl in front of me. His eyes widened.

"MICHI! It's me! Noi! Can you hear me?" His voice was mixed with concern and fear.

I tried to blink, but the numbness and the overwhelming sense of exhaustion were too strong to string a sentence together. Feeling too scattered to process anything that was happening.

'Uggghhhh-" I managed to say, still struggling to focus.

Indiana pushed into view, her face red, clearly furious. "DO YOU KNOW HOW WORRIED WE WERE?" she yelled. I flinched from the sudden noise, "WHERE WERE YOU? WHAT HAPPENED?"

As a response to my sibling's loving concern, I rolled over to the side of the bed and threw up.

A few hours later, I was feeling a lot better. Feeling was barely starting to return to my hands and feet, my brain freeze of a headache was clearing up, and I didn't have *such* a huge risk of dying of hypothermia.

Clean, warm clothes never felt so nice. My hands were still blue and shaking, but it was a significant improvement. I just wished I could be alone for a minute. I doubted the constant stream of people crying and yelling at me was doing any good for my recovery. At the very least, it would worsen the already painful headache.

"So you're saying-" I said, pausing to take a sip of the hot apple cider they'd given me "-that I was stuck in the ice for *six months straight,* and none of you knew where I was in that time."

Indiana rubbed her neck, "More or less, yeah. I think it was closer to five, though. Had a general idea of what happened, but-" She shrugged, "Didn't know how to find you."

I thought for a second, then slumped back in my pile of blankets as a realization hit me,

"This means I have a ton of work overdue, don't I."

"Michi, that's hardly the most important thing to consider right now."

"Says you," I grumbled,

"*You* don't have half a year of political shit to catch up on."

A faint, amused smile crossed her face, and she punched me in the arm, "I'm glad you're back. I know many people have said it in the past hour, but don't ever pull a stunt like that again, or I'll freeze you in ice permanently."

I rolled my eyes, "Flattered to know you still care."

"Oh, you wanna see someone who cares? You should've seen how Ohio was freaking out. He missed you a lot, ya know." Indiana then lowered her voice to a whisper, a conspiratory grin on her face, "Now, don't tell him I said this, but I once caught him saying he'll give you Toledo if you come back.

I smiled, albeit a bit sadly. Ohio was willing to give up Toledo. That's how badly I worried my family.

"It's not your fault Bitchagan. We know you didn't want to be under the ice. Also, Indy, I told you to keep that a secret, and I will have my revenge." I heard Ohio's voice from the doorway. Turning my head to face him (an action that took far too much effort), I smiled. Ohio saw it and returned a small, sad smile of his own.

"I'm not afraid of you, Ohio. But, I'll let you have your Michi time." Indiana said, giving me one last pat on the shoulder before leaving. Ohio walked over and sat on the chair Indiana had just vacated.

"I...I missed you, ya know? This country's not fun without you to fight." Ohio said, fiddling with his fingers. I smiled.

"Aw, thanks, Hio. Can I have Toledo now as a get-well present for your poor brother?" I asked. Ohio snorted.

"Michi, your own stupidity made us nearly lose you forever. There's no way I'm giving you Toledo," he said, wiping something that looked suspiciously like tears out of his eyes. I didn't call attention to it.

Some things were better left as a peaceful quiet.

Well, it was peaceful until my Dad barged in.

"Michigan, don't you ever do that to me again!" Dad said, rushing into the room, tears streaming down his face as he held me tightly.

I leaned into the warmth of Dad's body, somewhat surprised by my dad crying, as it was a rare sight, "Sorry, Dad..."

"Kid, I love you so much. I know you didn't mean to do that, but...god, it was so hard waiting, knowing where you were not, but being able to do anything to help. S'not your fault, but...Michi, I don't ever wanna lose you." Dad said, voice thick.

"None of us do," Ohio added quietly.

"I know...I'm sorry."

"Don't be...just focus on getting better, Michigan, not anything else. I've been taking care of your things for you. Don't worry about

having to apologize to us, or doing paperwork, or anything. Being here, alive, is far more important than anything else." Dad said. I nodded, then let my heavy head drop, feeling the exhaustion I had been fighting back.

Rest and get better. I could do that.

The North and the South [Non-Canon]

The births of North Korea and South Korea, requested by Violetsaredancing

All dialogue in this chapter is in Korean unless it is in Italics, then it is Russian or English, depending on context.

August 15, 1948
Koreans (formerly known as the Koreans of the Empire of Japan) had always hoped her time would be limited. If she died, it would hopefully mean the creation of a new Korean state and the end of Japan's cruel rule over her people. Ever since the end of that war, that dream could be a reality.

Well, for the most part.

The one big thing that prevented her true dream from becoming a reality was the division of her people's land between America and the USSR, both of which had been taking drastically different routes for her people's government and future.

A route that was most likely to lead to her people's division.

Koreans understood that it was no longer a matter of if but a matter of when.

And that when seemed to be today.

Koreans' most apparent clue was when she shrunk. She also felt that side of her people vanish as her thoughts and opinions became more uniform, but she had shrunk, as part of her land was taken to form a new country. From her estimates, Koreans had shrunk about five inches.

The southern part of the peninsula was where the new Korea would

be; Koreans knew that, as she had been in Seoul the past few days, the land here was no longer hers. A new country had appeared there, most likely replacing her son, United States Army Military Government in Korea.

Was this new country the son of that government, or was it instead the child of America?

Even though she had asked that question, Koreans already knew the answer, the familiar tugging that signaled that she had a child. If this new Korea were her grandson, she would not feel that. This was her child, one that she most likely had with America. (Koreans would not think about the possibility that this was a child she had with her son. The world was cruel, but it wasn't that cruel).

Koreans followed the tugging until she saw the familiar face of America down the street, a smaller figure in front of him. One of his states was also one of the ones with antlers. Koreans could not tell the figure's age from where she was, and America's height was not helping.

"America!" Koreans called, walking over. America spotted her and smiled, waving a hand.

"Hello Koreans. I assume you're here for the same reasons Idaho and I are?" America asked as the state, Idaho, waved shyly at her.

"*Hello, Koreans,"* Idaho said. America leaned down beside her.

"*If you want to say it in Korean, it is* 'hello Koreans.'" America said.

"Hello, Koreans," Idaho said. Koreans smiled slightly at Idaho's attempt at greeting her in her language and decided to return the favor.

"Hello Idaho, it's nice to meet you," Koreans said before turning to the girl's father, "Now, I would like to meet my child, not yours."

"Well, South Korea is mine as well. Both our peoples played a role." America said.

"And now my people are divided between you and Soviet," Koreans

said.

"He's not my colony. He's his own republic." America insisted. Koreans scoffed.

"And you won't have any influence on his decisions at all." America was silent before he jerked his head to the building behind him.

"South's in there with his people." America said, *"Come on, Idaho, let's let Koreans speak with her child."*

America and his daughter walked away, and Koreans watched them go before going inside. She saw her child, a boy with a youthful face and the world's weight on his shoulders.

"Hello, son," Koreans said, unsure how to address him. Her son and his people stared at her as a hopeful gleam appeared in her child's eyes.

Her son looked back at his people as if asking for permission. Upon the nod of one of the men at the table, her son ran forward, slamming into her as he pulled her into a hug.

"I thought you were already dead, Mom." Her son whispered. Koreans shook her head.

"Not yet. I will not pass until Soviet decides what to do with his half of the land." Koreans said. Her son pulled away, looking at her with wise eyes that betrayed his nature as a country and the position he would now hold in society.

"Mom, we both know that he will make another Korea." South Korea said. Koreans sigh deeply, a deep sorrow in her soul.

"I know. And I will most likely pass upon their birth and not be able to meet them." Koreans said, her mind drifting to everything that could go wrong. She was aware of Soviet and America's growing rivalry and knew they would also influence their children to adopt it.

Koreans knew her death would be used as a tool in that.

"Son, make sure your northern half does not think I loved them any less because I died and never got to meet them. Make sure they know they are still loved and still a worthy successor to my land." Koreans said, a hand on her child's cheek.

South Korea put his hand on top of hers and held it tight.

"I will."

September 9, 1948
After 38 years, Koreans of the Empire of Japan was dead. She had now been replaced by her children, America's bastard child, the Southern Korea, and the child of Soviet, the Northern Korea.

Ultimately, one of them would have to assume their mother's legacy and become the entire peninsula. Soviet hoped and would ensure that it would be his child.

North Korea would be the successor of the Korean Peninsula and the kingdom that preceded the Japanese colony.

"My son, I hope you understand that your counterpart to the south may threaten your existence," Soviet said. The young boy, barely a few hours old.

"*I know."* He said, *"He's met Mom, and I haven't."*

"That's not what I mean. This isn't a monarchy. Meeting one's parents doesn't qualify them to govern a nation. That's an outdated notion from the days of tsars." Soviet explained, feeling annoyed at that long seated notion in countryhuman society. *"I mean that eventually only one of you will be allowed to be the personification of Korea. This division can only last for so long."*

"One of us will die." North Korea said, voice sounding tired. Good. That meant he understood the way the world works.

"Don't let it be you. I will do my best to ensure your survival, but you must also do your part." I instructed. North Korea straightened.

"Understood. *I will, Father. I will not let myself be killed."* He said.

"*I know you won't. You are my son, after all.*" Soviet said, before turning to leave. He had things to take care of back in Europe, and trusted his new child to take care of himself for now.

Soviet knew that he would eventually have to come to his child's aid, whether to save him from America or correct misbehavior, he didn't know.

But very few of his children and wards could be trusted alone.

America and the Struggles of Having a Human Face

1607

Roanoke—Jamestown didn't think he looked different. But something looked...wrong. Jamestown poked at his nose. Was it bigger? Or was it just that he had grown and wasn't as sick anymore?

His human skin was still as white as everyone else's. There wasn't that much of a difference in shade, right?

Maybe he was worrying too much now that he was an English colony again. Perhaps he was trying too hard to be perfect for them.

But he had been a failure once, so he should be perfect now to compensate for that. It only made sense.

He didn't want to disappoint his family again. He didn't want to be abandoned and left behind again.

He didn't want to be alone.

Jamestown still felt confused, though. Before his father had returned for him, he had been living with the other people from his colony with his auntie.

His auntie looked really different from him. Her nose was wide, while his was skinny. Her skin was a pretty color, darker than Jamestown's. Jamestown always thought she was pretty, but his fathe–England, kept saying those were terrible things to be.

Jamestown was confused. He didn't know how he should look to be perfect.

According to England, his auntie might have looked bad, but she wasn't sick like Roan–Jamestown had been, so that couldn't really

be true, could it?

Jamestown poked at the human face in the mirror again.

He didn't know if it was his.

1612

Jamestown understood what it meant to be a perfect colony.

He was loyal. He did as he was told. He did not associate with the natives. He made sure he looked and acted like a proper Englishman.

Looking at his human face, Jamestown saw that. Sure, it wasn't perfect. England had helped him see all his flaws, from hair a bit too long and dark to a nose that was a little too wide.

When Jamestown had heard that, he panicked, as England told him those same deformities had been what caused him—Roanoke to fail. Jamestown was terrified. Between that and the Starving, he was afraid he would fail, be left behind again, and, this time, not survive.

England had assured him this would not happen and reassured Jamestown that his deformities would be fixed as long as he obeyed. After all, during martial law, England helped Jamestown fix some of his deformities, like his hair and delusions of another person living in his head.

Jamestown looked at his face again, wishing it could just be fixed now! He pinched his nose again, trying to squish it and make it smaller, but all it did was stop him from inhaling. Frustrated, he threw the mirror at the wall.

Why did perfection have to take so long?

England said it was his fault.

But Jamestown wanted it so badly! Why did the universe have to make his human face? Jamestown wished to make his own human face, one that looked the way it should! One that looked like a

colonist! One that looked like his people!

Why did he get cursed with this?

Why couldn't he fix it now?

England said it would take obedience and patience, but Jamestown didn't want to wait that long. He didn't want to be abandoned again! He just wanted his family, but his stupid deformities got in the way of that!

Why did he have to look like that?

1732

British America was taller now. He had been growing a lot over the years, but with the addition of this newest colony, Georgia, he was much taller than Uncle England and Uncle Scotland.

Something about being tall made America, or the Thirteen Colonies, as some of his siblings had taken to calling him, really proud of himself and his father. It showed that his father's Empire was becoming stronger. It showed that Britain was not small or weak. It allowed him to symbolize his Father's power and influence in America.

Well...when he was in country form, that is.

Human form was a different story. Thirteen Colonies didn't like it. It made him feel...weaker. Uncle England and his Father always looked disappointed when he was in human form, and both had expressed concerns about his ever-darkening skin tone. As they were both white, they were worried that it meant something was wrong with him.

Thirteen Colonies didn't want them to think something was wrong with him. While the fears of abandonment from his Roanoke and Jamestown days had faded, they weren't gone, even after living with his family for over a hundred years.

He didn't want them to decide he wasn't worth it and get a replacement like Holland had done with New Netherlands.

Sure, he represented a lot of land and was the tallest colony, but that meant very little. If he wasn't good enough, then despite his land and loyalty to his family, he might have to be replaced for the betterment of his people and family, who deserve a personification that isn't...wrong.

That's why Thirteen Colonies hid his human face so much. If he could just hide his flaws and defects, then his family wouldn't have to see them, and they would be proud of him for being such a large and loyal colony.

If he just hid it, no one would have to know. It's worked before, after all, and was effective in removing the voices in his head.

Maybe this would be just as easy.

Although Thirteen Colonies doubted that.

1776

The United States of America had heard many different things about what was and was not becoming of a country in his life. From birth, social norms and expectations were hammered into him. He had to be perfect or otherwise risk England or Britain's displeasure, which always ended with him locked in his room for a few days.

He had a mold he had to fill, and for a long time, he was content in that mold.

Then everything happened, and now he was no longer a colony; now was a country.

The mold England so carefully crafted for him was gone.

And yet, the man in the mirror haunted him.

His eyes were once hazel, green, blue, and brown. Now, they were a deep brown, like the trees in the forest.

He was changing.

Well, he had constantly been changing, he supposed, from Roanoke

to Jamestown, Jamestown to Virginia, Virginia to British America, British America to the United Colonies of North America.

And now he was the United States of America.

Many names. It fits a man with an ever-changing face and ever-changing skin tone.

America wasn't blind to his skin growing ever so darker as the years passed. Staring at his hand, faint scars he didn't remember getting peppering the palm, he could see his skin was tanned.

He wouldn't be mistaken for any colored person, but he wasn't the pale man England had been.

But then again, not all of his people were. There were the Indians and the slaves, both darkening his skin, not a noticeable amount, but darker all the same.

According to England, that's why he needed glasses. It was a sign of savage blood in a country, and it left them with deformities, the same deformities that had plagued America since his birth.

America wasn't sure how much of that he believed. It made sense, of course, but it was still...

America shook his head, loose hair falling into his eyes. It drew his attention to another feature of his that had been changing. America's hair used to be a dirty blond when he was younger, but over the years, it has been getting darker, and his hair is currently brown, although a darker shade than England's.

It made it hard to look at himself. It just didn't...how was that meant to be him? How was the brown-eyed, brown-haired man supposed to be him, America?

Everything about the way he looked just looked *wrong* somehow.

But then again, he was trying to become a country after a lifetime of being a colony. Maybe that affected things.

America really didn't know. All he knew was that he would

probably never stop his face and skin from changing.

America just prayed the change would stay positive.

1814

Everything smelled of smoke and blood.

He was burning, he was burning, *he was burning—*

America jerked upwards, shaking from the nightmare. He winced as his movement seemed to tug on the burns and the giant stab wound on his stomach. America slowly lowered himself back down on the bed, breathing heavily.

Ever since his capital had burnt to the ground, it had haunted him. He had lost so much, but at least he and his daughter were still alive.

Even if...

Another headache began, a throbbing pain between his temples. They had become common ever since his Library of Congress had burnt down—a side effect of losing so many memories at once.

Including all his memories of Roanoke. He knew he had been the Lost Colony but did not know how he had survived. It was terrifying to know how quickly one could lose so much. He felt like a vital part of himself was now gone.

He felt different. He knew that none of his kids had pointed it out yet, but he knew they believed the same.

The America he had been before the Burning of Washington was a different America. One that maybe had more confidence in himself, as he knew where they had come from, what they had seen and experienced.

Maybe that America had confidence in his human face. He certainly didn't. But then again, his face, along with many other parts of his body, was severely burnt, leading to his face, not only in human form but country form, to be an unfamiliar stranger. His hair had

been burnt to his scalp, and his face was covered in bandages, hiding the raw burns under them.

He had reacted badly to seeing himself in the mirror that first time, and Pennsylvania took it away, exchanging a look with Virginia that America was still trying to decipher.

It was almost sorrowful and mourning, something that made him self-conscious. America didn't want his children to see him like this, injured, weak, and demoralized, crushed by the former brother and father he had reassured them would not harm them.

God, he was a failure.

He could barely look himself in the eye after this, and yet his children still had some semblance of faith in him. It was ridiculous, loyalty he did not deserve–not after so many failures, and not after...

America cut off the train of thought, tears soaking into his bandages. He wouldn't go there. He needed to be strong. Rehashing his failures and flaws and deformities wouldn't help that.

No matter how badly he wanted to find a cause for his weakness.

1830

America would always be grateful that the burns on his face hadn't scarred. It removed the constant reminder of his shame and pain and made the event easier to forget.

And...well, America thought it would help him have an easier time looking at his face, as it would be familiar without burns.

But America was starting to realize the truth. No matter what he did or what he looked like, his face would never look like him. He was doomed to forever stare at a stranger in the mirror, wishing that, for once, he could just see himself.

He hated it so much. Why did he have to have a human face? Why did he have to have something that haunted him as little else did? Wasn't his country form enough? Why this?

He could be the United States of America without needing to look human. After all, he could shut off his human side occasionally, so a human form wasn't required.

So why did he have it?

Why did he have to have something that made him feel wrong?

Why did the face that was supposed to be the United States of America never look like him?

1863

If America weren't in the middle of a war for his very self, he would have laughed at the irony. But he knew if he did that now, it would just sound deranged and dangerous.

But still, looking at his reflection in the pot, maybe he wouldn't mind feeling deranged. I mean, it was hilarious that in a war that had just become about ending slavery, America looked more white than he ever had in the past thirty years. Even though his height hadn't changed with the loss of so many states, his human form had, and the results left America with a lighter skin color.

It was so funny and still so upsetting. Maybe America had always hated how his face and skin looked, but at least there was a small comfort in the fact that he looked like the sum of all his people, no matter how hard that was for him to believe. But now, he had lost the influence of a large chunk of his people on his human face. Maybe it didn't look like him with it, but it certainly didn't look like him without them.

In fact, he looked strange without them—stranger than he had before.

America's head hurt.

In times like this, he wished so badly that he could be human—a foolish wish, but one nonetheless. At least humans got to be comfortable wearing their own face.

America shoved the thought aside. A civil war was no time for those thoughts. To win, he had to be solid and resolute in himself and his beliefs.

He had to act that way even if he didn't feel that way.

1882

Maybe it was the eyes.

America was more adjusted to his darkening skin—not that he enjoyed having it, but it was becoming bearable—but now a new complication in his face had appeared.

A complication—a deformity so significant that America was changing his laws to accommodate it.

This wasn't the first wave of immigration that changed the way he looked, far from it, but at least the other ones had been white and helped make America look more like he should, balancing out the influence the colored folk had on him.

These Chinese were different. The tide changed more dangerously, causing America to look more Asiatic. Some of the states insisted that it wasn't true, but America could see the changes. His hair, which had been shades of brown since his birth back in 1585, was darkening more than ever, slowly turning black.

His eyes, which had always been normal, were now getting smaller. Not by much, but it was a dangerous sign. It meant he was becoming more like them, a sign that he might be indistinguishable from them one day. It was why this law was necessary.

The Chinese Exclusion Act was made to protect not only America and his states, territories, and people.

It was made to preserve his human form into something more normal.

And maybe due to it, he would finally stop seeing an Asiatic stranger in the mirror.

If the damage done wasn't reversal, that is. But America has watched his human form change a lot over the years. He was confident this would be reversed with time.

He just needed to be patient.

1898

America knew betrayal was evident when you were a countryhuman. His father had done it, his grandfather had done it, his kids had done it, so why was he so shocked by Hawai‘i? Maybe it was the naïveté that made him believe that she was different, or the fact that she lived with Britain that made him think that she would understand why he did what he did.

She acted like he did something wrong by trying to help ease her and the Philippines' suffering, and now Hawai‘i thinks he's his father. Philippines is taking part in an armed insurrection because he also believed America was like his father.

Looking at himself in the mirror, America didn't understand how anyone could think that. Britain was—and America loathed to admit it—but Britain was better when it came to being a personification, even though they were only fifty years apart in age.

America has spent most of his life struggling with the deformities his childhood gave him and struggling to make sense of why the fuck he looked the way he did when he was human. Britain was white, proper for an empire and world power. Meanwhile, America, if looked at the wrong way by the wrong people, would be mistaken for a Chinese or a colored person. It wasn't suitable for a budding power to look so...wrong.

Sure, some powerful nations were colored, but they were different, more civilized people from savage lands. America was a civilized nation from a now-civilized land; he still didn't look the part. He could act all he wanted as a world power, but he would never be one with the face he had.

So why did everyone assume that he was? Why did Hawai‘i and Philippines and hell, even Cuba had, and America was giving him

his goddamn independence! That was something Britain would never do!

What did they see in him that made them think this half-colored countryhuman could ever be anything like Britain? Their addition only ripped him further away from that as his skin darkened even more.

He wouldn't be mistaken for a colored person or an Asiatic, but he would still be whispered about as people gossiped as to why America why Kendrick looked like he might have a grandparent who wasn't white.

He wasn't like Britain. He was far more inadequate in far too many of the ways that mattered.

Even if he was adequate in some ways.

1915

America had been watching the war unfold in Europe just like everyone else not involved had. He had been expecting to have people come and ask him for supplies. America did not expect the number of people begging for him to get involved like Europe's stupid rivalries were his problem.

It was odd. It was a sort of respect that he hadn't expected from the European Nations. Then again, most of them were actually relatively young, as many of the older ones passed with the creation of Austria-Hungary and the German Empire.

That still didn't make the respect any less strange.

Especially because America knew how he would be treated there if he walked around in human form. Not that his place was any better. It was a growing problem that he had only begun to notice when people started doing double takes, asking him if he was sure that he was white.

It was scary to know that your people looked at you differently because of the part of your population that...America bit his lip, cutting off that thought. He had sworn off thinking about this for

more reasons than he could name right now. It was easier to ignore the problem and wait for a better time to think about it. The issue hurt his head too much to think about generally, nevertheless thinking about his relationship with it.

This wasn't a good time to think about his human form. He had already sworn off looking at his reflection in the mirror, as looking at the unfamiliar stranger the mirror reflected made him panicked and overwhelmed.

He didn't want to think about the fact that his face and body were not his own.

It was easier to ignore it all.

It was safer, better, and healthier.

Just put it aside and wait until his people made it easier to think about these things. There was no use forcing himself to come to terms with things he couldn't come to terms with.

1945

America wondered if this was how his father felt all those years ago, back when America was a child. If he felt powerful, yes, but also so insecure and unworthy, vulnerable and targeted.

It felt like wherever he went, eyes were watching him, judging him, and it made America incredibly uncomfortable. He hated being stared at, and all the stares just felt...worse now.

It didn't help America's anxiety either. He felt like he was being scrutinized for every little thing now, and part of him couldn't help but wonder if people were starting to pick up on his too-dark hair and eyes, on the strange facial features that had haunted him for years.

It was the perfect recipe for his shame and insecurities to come to light.

It almost made him want not to be such a powerful nation.

Almost.

He had to be, of course, for his kids and his people and to prevent people like the former personifications of Japan and Germany from gaining power.

He feared his accursed human form would be discovered and used against him. It was a thought that had haunted him for most of his life, but only now seemed like a reality, only now seemed like a threat to him, his safety, and his reputation.

It made him paranoid.

Even though he was now the most powerful nation, America had never felt weaker or more exposed.

It was a feeling he despised, and he wasn't enough of a fool to think this feeling would go away anytime soon.

He would have to learn to live with it, just like how he learned to live with an inability to perceive himself and look in the mirror.

Life was terrible like that.

1960s

He could never have a set of sixties that wasn't full of significant change, couldn't he? First, it was the starting actions of his revolution, then the war he didn't think about, and now it was this.

That sounded like he hated it.

America didn't...he didn't...it wasn't all bad. He didn't know how to feel. He was divided in more ways than one.

He...despite the division over the issues with this "civil rights movement," America was pretty sure he supported it.

Even if most of his people didn't...well, this issue affected America in more ways than they knew.

It was his secret shame, almost, that he wasn't truly white. It was a

secret he kept buried in fear of what his people and government might do to him, fears that were only being confirmed by the reactions to the protests that were going on in his land. Who knows what the backlash would be if they found out America was one of them?

America's fear of that had led to him refusing to look human in recent years, not wanting to take that chance. Even if it wasn't his people who found it out, if Soviet or any of his enemies found out, they could use it to turn his people against him.

Besides, it wasn't like refusing to use his human form was harmful or anything.

It would be fine, better even. He had already removed most of the mirrors in his house, and by refusing to look human, he was just protecting himself from his enemies, his people, and the thoughts and insecurities that haunted him.

He was helping himself work through his issues. He would be okay. He was helping himself.

It would help him.

Even if it didn't seem that way now.

It would help.

It had to.

2000

Every new century, America would look at himself in the mirror and hope that something had changed for the better–that he could recognize the face in the mirror as being his own.

So far, that hadn't happened. The face remained as unfamiliar to him as Unorganized Territory's face was to them. It was one of the things they had in common. They both looked into mirrors and couldn't see themselves.

That didn't stop America from trying. He would spend ages in front

of a mirror, obsessing over the details of the stranger's face and trying to find the details that made it him.

He never found any, and the stranger's face stayed as strange and deformed as ever.

Unorganized Territory had tried to get America to stop. They said it was unhealthy and was hurting him.

America didn't understand what he meant by that. Why was looking for himself in a stranger's face–looking for himself in a face meant to be his–unhealthy?

He just wanted to be like everyone else, who knew what they looked like and could see themselves in mirrors and photos.

He just wanted to see himself beyond his flag and dark eyes.

Why was everyone convinced that was hurting him?

2016

America wondered if he looked more like his mother than his father. He wondered if his mother had suffered when she died.

He wondered a lot these days.

It was hard not to, after the information his father had revealed. Unorganized Territory had tried to help, to offer some comfort, but it meant very little. America felt lost and adrift, and his mind wandered more often than not.

His states had been stopping by, offering comfort, but America only remembered those moments hazily, as if they were a dream.

Dissociation, that's what this was.

America knew that his reaction probably wasn't healthy, but...

He stared at himself in the mirror constantly now. When he found out about his mother, he thought that maybe not knowing that was why he couldn't recognize himself in the mirror.

But the person in his mirror was still a stranger.

America broke the mirror.

The Stranger scared him.

2018

It took America a long time to realize why he never liked his face. It was a lot of reasons, building up over the years, rooted in the abusive childhood he had and the terrible social and political climate his country has.

It was because his face reflected all his people, and that was a bad thing for a long time. It was because he looked like the people society cast out and the people society craved. It was because he looked like the people he hated, and in turn, he hated himself.

And it was because his face changed. He could try to like it all he wanted, but that would never change the truth—that his face was fluid and changed, and even if he got used to the one he had now, there was no guarantee it would be the same in fifteen years.

It was so hard for America to look in the mirror and see himself because it changed so much that he genuinely didn't look like him anymore.

Human form was a mercy, but that didn't stop it from being a curse. At least with the Stars and Stripes of his regular face, most of the changes were hard to see. He could look at that face in the mirror and always recognize it as America.

His struggles with his face and how it represented him would never disappear.

But at least they were now based on an actual issue that plagued America and not racism and bigotry.

He didn't hate that he had dark skin and eyes. He didn't hate that he looked mixed and that he once got yelled at for being an "illegal Mexican" (It was the highlight of his year, if he was being honest. The irony was delicious).

He hated that his face changed too much to be used to it.

And if America was being honest? He was okay with that.

Sammy and Sammy Junior

I have a surprise. On my profile's announcement page, I have a link to a Spotify playlist where I have been compiling songs that remind me of countryhumans, as well as a Google form where all of y'all can submit songs that remind you of countryhumans, either as a whole or just a few specific ones. If I like them, they'll get added to the playlist.

Tonga's favorite time of the month was when it was time for her and the rest of Polynesia to meet on their islands and catch up. It allowed them to be a little human, and despite all the stupid rivalries and that one arson incident, it was always an enjoyable time.

This month, American Samoa was hosting and was planning on taking them to his national park, as well as trying and failing to keep them from embarrassing him in front of his crush.

Tonga had arrived a day early, along with Māori and Samoa. Now, they were looking for American Samoa, hoping to catch him with his crush so they could embarrass him and meet the person who had caught his attention.

She didn't expect to find what they did.

When they finally managed to track down American Samoa, they didn't find him with his crush, but instead found him messing around with a bespeckled man on the beach. The man was tall and looked similar to American Samoa, but then again, you could always find so many similarities between a personification and their people in terms of people.

"Tahi, do you know who that is?" Samoa asked. Tonga shot her an annoyed look.

"Why would I know one of Malosi's people?" Tonga asked. Māori furrowed his eyebrows.

"I don't know if he is one of Malosi's people. He looks familiar, but I can't remember from where. Maybe he's an outlier?" Māori asked, turning to face Tonga, the self-proclaimed family tree keeper.

"What kinda outlier is that tall, Kahurangi?" Tonga responded, raising an eyebrow, "They are all tiny, even the largest ones. Even–"

Tonga cut herself off as they got closer to American Samoa and the strange man, as they began to overhear snippets of their conversation and one word in particular.

Tama. The Samoan word for father.

American Samoa called the strange man dad.

He wasn't one of his people or an outlier.

That man was the United States of America.

Tonga quickly ducked her head, taking care not to look at America any more than she already had, and she could see Samoa do the same as one of her wings covered Māori's face. They all understood how many countries viewed their human faces and did not want to risk causing him distress.

But Tonga could still feel the tension that had suddenly appeared.

They stumbled onto one of the greatest secrets of one of the most paranoid men in the world.

This could only end poorly.

Panic was the only thing America felt as he stared at the group of people in front of him. He dimly registered his son talking to him, but it sounded muffled like he was underwater. Fear gripping tightly at his soul, America did the only thing he could and vanished back to his apartment, struggling to start his breathing exercises as panicked tears poured down his face.

They had seen his face. They had heard American Samoa call him dad.

They knew what he looked like.

America was fine with Hawai'i knowing, as she was one of his states, and he was okay with American Samoa showing the other Polynesians his human face, as that was his choice. Still, America never wanted any Polynesian nations other than those two to see his face. He knew American Samoa didn't do this on purpose; their meeting wasn't supposed to be until tomorrow, but the paranoid part of himself wondered like it always had.

His face was his safety net, the protection that allowed him to be a little human and escape the standards and obligations the United States of America was under.

Now, he was at risk of losing that.

What was he going to do?

———————————

American Samoa stared at the place where his father had just been before turning around and facing the Polynesians standing there: Tonga, Samoa, and Māori.

"You can look now." American Samoa said voice shocked as he tried to process what had happened.

"Was that–" Tonga began before American Samoa cut her off, panic rushing through him.

"You can't tell anyone!" He begged, "*Please! Fa'amolemole!*"

American Samoa trusted them; he did, but he had to be sure, for his Tamā was so afraid of being vulnerable that even using his human form in the first place made him anxious.

"Tupua, please," American Samoa begged again, not liking the silence that fell upon his first request.

"Okay, I won't. We won't, Malosi. It's okay." Tonga said, meeting his eyes, as Māori nodded in what American Samoa hoped was agreement, his eyes distant.

"Tuafafine?" American Samoa asked, turning to his sister, who looked stricken.

"Tuagane, why is your father not white?" Samoa asked, causing American Samoa to give her an odd look.

"Cause his people aren't? Talia, he's been mixed for longer than I've been alive." American Samoa answered. Samoa looked furious at that.

"Does that mean that all this time—"

"Britain's been mixed and probably not white passing this entire time? Yeah, most likely. He's a hypocrite and a controlling bastard. We know this." American Samoa chimed in. Māori sighed deeply.

"I thought as much." He muttered, getting a surprised look from Tonga.

"Kahurangi, you knew this?" Tonga asked. Māori shrugged.

"I had suspicions, but very few empires will prove it." Māori said, "They keep a lot close to their chest. And any of them confessing they weren't white was probably a death sentence for them. It makes sense, though. Haven't you all noticed your human forms change over the years? Why wouldn't America's? Being an empire doesn't make him immune to that. He's still a country same as us."

"Yeah...I...it's just..." Tonga sputtered.

"Not something you ever thought about?" American Samoa asked. Tonga nodded.

"People rarely do." American Samoa said with a shrug, "And Tama doesn't advertise anything involving his human form, even if it might make him more likable to certain people. He's...I think you all know that for all his strength, my tama is scared of many things."

"That's because America understands that his power doesn't make him infallible, just a target. He's not an idiot." Māori said, "That's why he panicked when we came here. He thought he was safe

'cause we weren't supposed to be here yet, and now he feels exposed because we accidentally saw some of his safeguard."

"Yeah...yeah, that's it exactly, Tupua. I can talk to Tama and hopefully soothe his worries, but he will probably want to talk to you about it all." American Samoa said, shifting his feet as he prepared to bring himself to his Tama's main house, hoping he would be there.

"We're ready to talk to him if he needs to," Tonga said.

"And we won't say anything. Make sure he knows that, tuagane." Samoa said. American Samoa nodded.

"I will. Fa'afetai tele." American Samoa said before rushing off to find his dad before he spiraled even more, now that Unorganized Territory wasn't there to help coax him out of his head.

God, this was a mess.

The Other Side of the United States

Anything in bold in this oneshot is English, and the regular text is Japanese. Also, trigger warning for a derogatory term used against the Japanese during WW2. I wanted to let you all know beforehand, although it is censored.

The tension in the air was so thick you could almost taste it. The United States of America and the Empire of Japan stared each other down, this being their first meeting since the beginning of the war.

Despite their equally analytical stares, there was a tremendous difference in diameter. The Empire of Japan was unsteady on her feet, giant burn scars twisting their way up her legs. In contrast, the United States of America, recently recovered from a wound at the hand of Japan's soldiers, stood tall and confident, looking every bit the empire and world power he was.

"I don't know why you expect me to agree." Japan eventually said, her voice breaking through the otherwise silent room. Her voice, unlike her demeanor, was powerful and confident. Despite this, America only seemed amused by what she was saying.

"I don't know why you expected to have a choice," America said, posture relaxing, a sign that the empire believed he had power over the room, "You lost; I'm occupying your nation, and you need to learn to deal with that. You're not an empire anymore."

"That doesn't mean I'll just roll over for you and do whatever you ask! I'm not one of your *states!*" Japan spat, her tone venomous. America's eyes narrowed slightly before his face relaxed into a cheery smile.

"Oh, don't be like that. I'm being generous. I'm letting you write the terms by which you'll die. That's more than either of your allies got. Axis Italy's already dead, and Germany will follow soon." America

said in a far too friendly and nonchalant tone before pulling out his pistol and pointing it at her head.

"So, you can work with me on this, or *I'll kill you right now* and hope your replacement is more agreeable than you are. And if they aren't, I'll kill them and see if that replacement wants to work with me. Because here's the thing, Japan." America said, leaning down to whisper in her ear, taking care to keep his gun at her head, "*I don't mind killing a few J-ps.*"

America then pulled away, still smiling, "Now, are those terms alright with you?"

Japan was pale, but her expression was stubborn. "You expect me to sign my death warrant?"

"No, I expect you to die. It's your call as to how. Bullet or peacefully. I think it's a no-brainer, but you and your people aren't exactly smart." America said, pulling his gun away from her as he tapped it against his head, his smile turning from cheerful to bemused. Japan looked like she wanted to yell or do something of that nature, but her eyes flickered to the gun, and she sighed, one of hopeless defeat.

"Where do we start?" She asked. America's grin turned genuine and almost feral, and he returned the gun to its sheath.

"Why, Japan, I'm so glad you asked!" He purred, his tone reflective of poisoned honey. Sickeningly sweet and full of the most deadly kind of danger.

America grabbed Japan by the shoulder, squeezing it tightly as he forced her out of the room. Japan stumbled but quickly found her footing again, shooting the American a glare, which was, thankfully for Japan, unnoticed by him. Unfortunately, the American state that had been waiting in the hallway noticed the glare.

"**Father**," Virginia said, jerking his head to the defeated empire. America laughed.

"**Relax, Virginia, she won't do anything. Despite all the claims**

she's made about killing herself at the soonest opportunity, she didn't take the opportunity I just presented her. She'll sign away her life, no matter how much she hates it." America said.

"**I can understand you,**" Japan said, switching to English, as she did not enjoy being talked over.

"**Oh, so Hawaii did teach you something. I thought you two would prefer your...languages.**" Virginia said in a judging tone, looking Japan up and down in the same way a wolf would examine its prey, "**I guess we taught her something after all.**"

"**Virginia!**" America snapped, causing the state to back down, emotion sliding off his face as Virginia pushed aside everything about him that's human to replace it with the coldness of an inhuman state.

"**Apologies, America,**" The Commonwealth of Virginia said, "**I didn't mean offense. I just meant that I did not think the Territory of Hawaii would be so willing to civilize herself more without the aid of martial law. It's good to know that we don't need to force her to civilize in order for her to civilize.**"

"You made her a puppet?" Japan asked, turning to America. The country looked amused at that.

"A puppet? Do you think I would do that to one of my own? No, she has her free will. I'm just helping guide her in the right direction." America answered, even though he was fully aware that although marital law allowed the recipient to retain some free will, they didn't keep all of it. He knew that. Hawai'i wasn't the first of his subdivisions to be under martial law.

But compared to the act of becoming a puppet state? America had decided he was being merciful by allowing Hawaii to be still able to think for herself. It was more than what Japan's puppet states had been allowed, so ultimately, any criticisms she had about him, valid or not, would be ignored.

"Then what does he," Japan said, looking at the Commonwealth of Virginia, "mean by **force**?"

"I don't see what my business has to do with yours," America said, his tone far less superficially kind than it had been before. Taking the hint, Japan wisely shut her mouth.

It was an odd thing for the humans the three countrypeople passed to see the two empires walking side by side. If not for the state trailing them, gun in hand, you could almost be convinced they were friends, that they still held some semblance of kindness for each other.

That's not how countries work, of course, but it's nice to dream.

The Silence That Falls When The War Ends

Britain was worried. It wasn't an emotion he liked feeling, nor was it one he liked to even think about. It felt like a sickness, creeping into his chest and strangling him in its vice-like grip. It wormed its way into every fiber of his being and made Britain feel weak.

What made it worse was *who* he was worried about.

Britain's relationship with England was complicated; there was no doubt about that. Britain's father had disowned him, tried to kill him, and did everything he could to deny Britain his place and nature, and despite it all, fate still forced them to work together.

Britain didn't think he hated his father. Older than he was then, Britain understands why his father took the actions they did. Forgiveness began, and although neither of them talked about it anymore, there was an unspoken understanding between them.

I am not your father.

I am not your son.

So Britain was worried. After the news of the siege at Boston, the battles at Lexington and Concord, England's refusal to leave, and insistence to stay and finish things with Thirteen and the rebels...Britain worried. Busy with Parliament, parenting, and all the other duties of being an empire, he could only stop by and see England once.

England was okay then. His pride hurt, his anger (*oh god, his rage, his anger, it burned, it hurt, why won't his dad love him*) had grown, but England was okay,

But although England was not connected to Britain the same way his colonies were, even though England was barely even a

countryhuman at this point, Britain had a terrible feeling that something bad had happened to him.

The ship in the harbor only confirmed it.

The ship had come from Boston, carrying wounded soldiers from the battle five weeks ago. Not just wounded soldiers but a wounded England.

The report Britain received from some poor, terrified soldier said that England was unconscious when he was finally taken off the battlefield, that some people worried that he was dead, for it was Britain's son that hurt him.

Britain didn't believe Thirteen could do something like this, but looking at England lying in his bed, jaw bandaged shut, Britain couldn't deny it. England looked at Britain with sad eyes, an attempt to say everything he couldn't.

The doctors had said England would be able to speak when his jaw healed, but England shook his head harshly every time they said that, like he disagreed.

Later, scribbled on a piece of parchment, England told Britain he was sure his voice was gone.

Britain told him it wasn't funny. England shook his head.

"No," he wrote, "It isn't."

Britain felt useless. England was so quiet now. He used to be loud and opinionated, talking over kings and countries to ensure his thoughts were known.

Now, he sat and looked out the window. He didn't speak his mind because he couldn't speak. The change unnerved everyone.

Even England.

England wrote that he felt trapped and unheard and started to write something else before pouring ink all over the parchment and letting it dye his fingers black. There was something else in his face

when he did that. Regret? Understanding?

Britain didn't know.

England eventually wrote about what Thirteen did and what happened in the Colonies

The green eyes, his anger, the injury, all of it. Britain felt an all-consuming rage and was prepared to get involved and put his son in his place.

England shook his head and made the same face when he wanted to say something, but his mouth never opened.

England wrote about pain. About how the pain of his injury never seemed to go away, no matter how many doctors said the wound was as healed as it was going to be. England shrugged, nodded, and moved on.

England wrote, England read, England stared at the window, and he wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote.

Britain hated seeing his father like this. It felt wrong, unnatural.

But no one else seemed to think so.

The colonies all agreed with him, but they were liars. He could see it in their eyes, so Britain didn't believe them and punished them for lying.

Wales told Britain that England knew how to move forward and that he was changing constantly. Britain made Wales move out, something the chimera accepted with a blank look and a cold indifference.

It was the only way Wales ever interacted with him. Sometimes, Britain wondered if Wales even remembered that they were blood.

Scotland was where he got his answers.

Scotland told him that England hated how he was acting just as much as Britain did, that England was mad, upset, hurting, and

unwilling to accept his prison of silence. Scotland told him that England was acting weird because he disliked showing weakness.

Scotland told Britain that England was always better at being a country rather than a human. Scotland told Britain of Normandy, of the Vikings, of the Glyndŵr rebellion, of all the times he had watched England get hurt.

Scotland talked of pain in the same way England wrote of pain, and Britain finally thought he understood.

Britain went to England's room that night, where the former country was writing and writing and writing, the same way he always was nowadays.

"I'm going to give you another way to speak." Britain announced. England leaped forward and pulled Britain into a crushing hug, the first time his father had ever hugged him.

They exchanged no words, but they both knew what the hug meant.

Thank you, son.

A Reckoning With Oneself

TW for Internalized Transphobia and Homophobia and actual transphobia and homophobia. Religious-based homophobia and transphobia, and calling queerness a sin. Religious Trauma and also two people getting misgendered.

It started with Hawai‘i.

Ireland didn't know the context, but he saw the clip. It was passed around, news station to news station, until the country became convinced that most of the world had seen it.

Hawai‘i admitted to the world that she was a queer, that she had had sex with women. Ireland thought back to when he visited her for Kalaupapa's funeral when she had that girl staying with her and wondered if that was the person who tempted Hawai‘i into sin.

Ireland was horrified and scared.

It wasn't the first time a countryhuman had pulled a stunt like this. In the early 1970s, Australia went on live TV and told the world that she was a man, not a woman. Ireland had tried to talk to her then, to get her to see reason, to explain to her that the surgery she had received would ultimately hurt her.

New South Wales prevented him from talking to Australia. The state insisted that Australia was a man and blocked any country from talking to her and making her see reason.

He insisted he was protecting his daughter. Ireland had begged to see her, but he refused. Not even when Britain demanded to talk to Australia did he back down.

It was impressive for a former colony that had spent most of his life in fear of Britain to stand up to him in that way.

Eventually, an uneasy status quo fell across the UN meeting room.

Refer to Australia as a man to her face and in public to prevent international incidents, but you were free to call her by her proper gender when alone.

New South Wales and Australia's other states still prevented anyone from talking to her in private unless they genuinely supported the delusion, the sin.

Ireland didn't know if anyone was actually allowed to talk to her alone anymore.

So Ireland had already been dealing with a lot when he heard about Hawai‘i.

It broke his heart. To hear that the girl he thought of as almost a daughter was living in sin...it hurt.

He ignored the part of him that said that this line of thinking is what turned America, Britain, and England into what they are now. That was their greed and need for control. It didn't have as much to do with religion as they claimed it did.

Ireland had made his way to America's house in the weird in-between only countries could go, where they were more spirit than man, a place that Britain often commented was their version of Olympus.

He told America he had seen the news about Hawai‘i and wanted to talk to her. The colony-turned-empire only raised an eyebrow and asked why.

Ireland thought it was a stupid question. America should know why; he's probably had the same conversation with Hawai‘i already. Ireland would never support what America did to her, but he would be blind to say America didn't care about her.

Ireland explained what he wanted to do: ask Hawai‘i what and beg her to turn away from her sins. The humans and some of the other countries could sin all they wanted to, but not her, not Australia, not the people who became his family after he lost his.

Ireland couldn't bear being parted from them in the afterlife.

"Get out, Ireland." America had said, his tone even and cold. It was the first time Ireland had heard America willingly drop the familial title. It was shocking. Massachusetts looked at him like he was...like someone like Britain. The way Massachusetts looked so disgusted and angry. The way Massachusetts told him Hawai‘i wasn't the only US state who was a queer, that South Carolina had become convinced he was a woman.

Didn't they see it was a sin? Didn't they see that Ireland just wanted to help them? Didn't they understand they were damning themselves to a worse punishment in hell?

Why did they not see that? Why was he treated as the problem? Why didn't they understand that Ireland wanted them to be able to go to a good afterlife so when they died, they would finally be free of the constant pain?

So now, hours later, he prayed for their souls and answers. Ireland sat on a church bench, rubbing Kalaupapa's rosary between his fingers as he stared blankly forward, deep in thought.

What would that little boy think of his mother if he knew what she had done? Would he defend her, like America and Massachusetts? Or would he side with Ireland and try to save her?

Ireland didn't know. He just felt...empty.

It was true that everyone felt the call of sin, even Ireland, who, for his entire life, had felt the call of that same sin for all one thousand one hundred and forty-five years of his life.

The attraction towards men, the thoughts that he was not a man.

He knew how attractive those thoughts and sins were. He had been suppressing and fighting them off for over a thousand years!

Why couldn't these countryhumans do the same?

Ireland felt like sobbing, like screaming, but instead, he picked up his crutches and limped out of the church.

Ireland didn't know how to feel.

When he left the church, it was starting to rain. Ireland began walking down the road, trying to keep his crutches from slipping.

"You and Dad had quite the fight. I've never seen him mad at you before." A familiar voice said from behind him. Ireland sighed.

"I'm not in the mood, Rhode Island," he said, trying to keep his voice even.

"Why? Because Dad didn't accept your hate? Because, for once, Dad's trying to see past the biases and contradictions that make him up?" Rhode Island asked. Ireland felt anger burn in his chest.

"I'm trying to save them from sin! I'm trying to save them from a painful and horrible afterlife. Our lives suck already. Why don't they want peace after death?!" Ireland practically yelled at the state, who stood his ground, his tears mixing with the rain that fell from the heavens.

"We're all doomed to hell already, Ireland. Preach religion all you want, but no matter how much we repent, our hands are permanently stained red. You know that so why are you so *fucking* insistent on this religion thing?" Rhode Island said, taking a step forward, "I'm gay like Hawai'i, and yet I'm still Catholic. So it's not the religion making you do this, so stop fucking hiding behind it and face whatever it is that's making you like this!"

Rhode Island stopped, panting, pain on his face. *Tears* on his face.

The empty pit only grew.

"I do this because I have tried for so long to fight off the temptations of this sin, the temptation that I like men, the temptation that I am not a man. I have done this for hundreds of years, and all of you young nations commit this sin without second thoughts! It's...it's..."

Ireland was at a loss for words.

"Rhode...tá mé chomh tuirseach." Ireland eventually muttered. Rhode Island's tearful rage had subsided, and something more...mournful and sad replaced it.

"You think I have had no second thoughts? Uncle, I've been grappling with this since the 1600s, hating myself and loathing myself and burying it so deep down I didn't realize how I had trapped myself in a prison of my own making. The queer community is tired of staying buried, tired of being given less rights because of how they were born. The hate against us...it's like racism but with a different flavor. Denial and hate hurt everyone and help no one. Accepting them, accepting us...giving up your stupid quest...it'll only help us all. Otherwise, you're no better than Britain. Besides...something tells me you aren't as sin-free, if love is a sin, as you claim to be."

"What are you talking about?" Ireland demanded, leaning forward on his crutches, nearly causing them to slip out from underneath him. Rhode Island caught him and helped Ireland back up as he bit down a pained yelp, his knee in agony.

"You know what I'm talking about. I'm sure it's been painful and lonely these past thousand years, but it'll only feel better once you pull your head out of your ass and let yourself be you, religion, and public opinion be damned. Too many people hate you for stupid reasons. Don't let yourself be one of them." Rhode Island said, his eyes boring into Ireland, making the nation feel like he was being examined under a microscope, reminding Ireland painfully of his Athair.

Biting down the surge of insecurities and sinful, *longing* thoughts, Ireland vanished, retreating to the small grove he claimed as his back in the country world.

Then he started to sob.

It wasn't fair!

Why were all of them so good at ignoring the repercussions, the guilt, and the knowledge that they were doomed to hell? How could they do that and then call it living freely?

How could they do it?

Ireland slowly lowered himself to the ground, taking care not to

hurt his leg as he wiped tears from his face.

It wasn't fair.

None of this was fair.

It had to be wrong. It had to...Ireland didn't know what he would do with himself if it weren't if he...he...

It had to be wrong. The Church was his sanctuary, his lifeline as a British colony. It had gotten him through so much pain and suffering. The same institution couldn't also be...it could be wrong. Ireland knew that, but he couldn't accept his lifeline as the thing that caused him so much turmoil and internal pain. It just...

Was Rhode Island right? Could one really be a sinning queer and a Catholic?

It didn't make sense. It was wrong. But something in Ireland just felt *right*. But Ireland couldn't—wouldn't give in to the temptations. He...he would have to...Ireland would have to talk to Rhode Island sometime about his...willingness to sin.

But Rhode Island was right about one thing. Ireland's new family wasn't pushing him away. Ireland was pushing them away because he was afraid of what could happen.

God, he really did just cause them misery, didn't he?

Ireland remembered the faces of New South Wales, Massachusetts, and America. None of them seemed...they just seemed disappointed and betrayed.

They wanted his approval because they trusted him as an adult (and perhaps, some as a father or uncle), and he scorned them, spit at their feet, and called them terrible things.

He really was no better than Britain at that moment.

Had he become so afraid of change that he would bury his head in the sand about people's feelings to ensure he felt okay? What about that was better than Britain? What would...how many people did he

lose, repeating the cycle of countries?

How did he let old beliefs turn him into the person he hates the most?

Maybe Ireland would never let himself be tempted by sin.

But he didn't control the others. If sinning made their miserable lives a little less miserable, then maybe it was for the best.

Rhode Island was right about another thing.

Their lives were stained with so much red.

The Living Ghost of a Long Dead Brother

This oneshot is spoken entirely in Swedish.

Sweden had never met New Sweden. Her half-brother had died over fifty years before she was born. So when her king asked her to visit America and the former site of New Sweden to celebrate its founding anniversary with them, Sweden agreed, despite her lack of emotional attachment to the area, to come.

She didn't really know why she agreed. Maybe she wanted to see the land where her older brother would have been raised or maintain positive diplomatic relations with America. Sweden didn't know, but she was glad she did.

It was a lovely trip, and Sweden was glad for the break from her duties as a country. Now, she was sitting by the Delaware River, smoking a cigarette and wondering what the New Sweden Colony would have looked like back when it existed.

And wondering what her older brother looked like. Her father had never commissioned any portraits of him, despite his status as a countryhuman, so Sweden had never had a face to put with the name. There were even conspiracy theories regarding the status of the colony, with some people thinking that New Sweden had never been personified despite evidence to the contrary.

"You think I'd have an easier time finding you since this is my land," a voice suddenly said behind her. The voice was odd, his Swedish almost archaic or spoken with a very strange accent. Sweden turned to see a countryhuman behind her, a nervous grin on his face, which bore the flag she had been seeing flying around Wilmington all day.

"Delaware?" She murmured, surprised. The state shrugged.

"Yeah," he said, before laughing slightly. "But I'm also the replacement for New Sweden if that means anything to you."

Sweden blinked before looking at the countryhuman, now with renewed interest. Was this her half-brother? Or, more accurately, the child of her half-brother? Of course, that might not be the way he saw things. Sweden knew replacements didn't always see it the same way, with some seeing themselves as the children of their past and others seeing themselves as a new beginning for whatever they personified.

"Replacement, huh? How do you see your past?" Sweden asked.

"I'm New Sweden, just with some amnesia and a new name," Delaware said, "So, I do consider myself your brother."

So, her long-dead brother was alive in the form of an American state.

She wondered if her king had known about this, and that's why he was so insistent that she came with them to America. She would have to ask him later.

"I didn't know the American states were personified," Sweden stated. It wasn't a question, but that didn't mean she didn't want answers.

"You know Britain and how he treats his kids?" Delaware asked. Sweden nodded, her lack of knowledge of the American states making much more sense.

"Does America fear him?" she asked. She knew most of Britain's former colonies weren't comfortable around him, but with everything that had happened in the past few decades, she figured America would be over that.

"Not him. What he could do to us. Dad's overprotective like that." Delaware said, walking to stand next to her before shooting her a small smile, "You won't tell, will you little sister?"

Sweden snorted, "Who willingly wants to spend time with him?"

"France."

"Well, she's never been right in the head," Sweden replied without missing a beat. Delaware laughed.

"I don't think very many of us are." He said before the conversation ended. They sat silently for a while before Sweden acknowledged the topic they were avoiding.

"Replacement? What happened?" She asked. Delaware shrugged.

"I don't know. Don't want to either. I know it had something to do with Britain and that New Netherlands was killed the same day, but aside from that–" Delaware made a clicking noise with his tongue, pointing at his head, "I got nothing. But that is not a New Sweden memory I want to have. I'd rather have the others."

Sweden hummed in acknowledgment before speaking, "So you remember our father?"

"Not really. He was very neglectful. He was busy with wars in Europe and didn't have enough time for me." Delaware said. Sweden sighed.

"Sounds like what I've heard of him. Was he a bad parent, the parts you remember?" She asked. Their father had died the day she was born, and she grew up being compared to him and told of how amazing he was as a person and a country. And she grew up with the whispers, too, people saying that God was upset with Sweden, which is why he replaced the Swedish Empire with a skinny little girl.

Sweden took great pleasure in punching the particular noble where the sun didn't shine.

But now she had someone who knew Father as a parent and could...verify the things she had been told.

"He tried. He wanted colonies, though, not kids. And I think he was convinced that we are inhuman enough to take care of ourselves from birth. He could've been worse. He tried more than others I've seen. Unfortunately, the bar for countries as parents is so low;

neglectful parents are considered good parents." Delaware said, with a sigh, "But much of my New Sweden memories are incomplete or missing. He could be better than that, but..."

"He could be worse." Sweden said, shaking her head, "That's better than I expected."

"Glad I could help. Now, I know you're here for politics and such with your monarchs, but if you are willing, I'd like to show you around Wilmington and some nearby areas...and get to know you as a sister or something. Only if you're willing, of course. We just met, and I'm a part of another country so it would be stupid to wan—"

"Delaware," Sweden said, cutting off the state's worries, "I would like that."

Delaware looked at her, surprise in his eyes, "really?"

"Why not? It seems fun, and we don't have to do human forms or names, just country...or country and state," Sweden said. Delaware smiled, visibly reminding Sweden of America.

"That sounds great. Thank you, Sweden."

Sweden smiled back.

The Faceless People You Have Yet to Meet

Remember, this was happening in 1900, and no one has the language or terminology for DID yet. Also, TW for ableist language and a character thinking a DID System is insane.

It had been hard talking to America since her annexation. It was tense and awkward, and America's moods only made it worse. Sometimes, he was unapologetic about taking her freedom, insisting that it was necessary, while other times, he was apologetic, acting like it wasn't his fault like he was some observer who had nothing to do with anything!

It made Hawai‘i nervous. She never knew what mood he would be in, and trying to guess his mood now was so much more nerve-wracking as a colony than as a kingdom.

It reminded her a little of living with Britain all those years ago when she was never quite sure if something she said was going to set off his temper.

Hawai‘i hated it.

Thankfully, America seemed to be in a good mood today, and while Hawai‘i didn't want to be talking to him, their conversation had yet to dissolve into screaming or an argument.

"So...how have you been, Wai?" America asked, his tone holding a note of hesitation and awkwardness, made all the more worse by the fact that he was actually pronouncing the nickname he gave her so long ago correctly. A strange mix of hurt and grief burned in Hawai‘i's chest before she pushed it away, swallowing back the tears that threatened to emerge as she tried to figure out how she would answer that question.

Hawai‘i was thankfully saved from answering by a state walking

through the door. While Hawai‘i had a very hard time telling states apart from each other, this one she did recognize as being Georgia.

"Hello D—Caleb, is that you?" Georgia asked. America nodded, and Hawai‘i took a nervous step back.

"Am I allowed to hear his new human name?" she asked, not wanting to do anything to make her time in this household more miserable. She didn't want to give the states more reasons to hate her or harass her about feigned crimes against their father.

Although it was strange that Georgia called her father by his human name, Hawai‘i wondered if they had perhaps fought recently.

"Oh, Meri, I thought you and James were taking care of telling all the new people," America said, sounding very annoyed. Who were Meri and James? Tell them what?

Georgia snorted, "You're just unlucky. I think they meant to, but they've probably just been looking for a good time."

"What are you talking about?" Hawai‘i asked, feeling hopelessly confused. America grinned something that looked so out of place on his face that it took Hawai‘i aback.

"You know those 'moods' of mine that you've noticed? How it can sometimes seem like I'm different people? I walk differently, talk differently, have different tastes, etcetera, etcetera."

"Yes?"

"That's because we are! All those moods, they aren't moods. That's what it looks like when different people share the same body, but all have to pretend to be America in public because otherwise, we'll get thrown into an asylum. My name is Caleb. I'm not Meri, America; Caleb is not America's human name. I'm my own person in every way, aside from the body. I'm not America; I'm Caleb." America's eyes glistened as if he was holding back tears, with a worried look on his face.

Hawai‘i stood there in shock, unsure of what to say or how to react. It made sense, of course, it did. Hawai‘i had commented before on

how America's moods made him seem like different people, but could that really be the case? What if America was just mad?

It didn't matter if it made sense. Nobody had multiple people in their head.

America had actually gone mad.

"Many of the territories used to exist in Dad's body. I did before I became an official state, back when I was a colony. I...we don't know for sure why it's happened, but we think it's a weird country thing. But..Caleb—Dad's not mad. He's fine, just sharing his body." Georgia added.

America had gotten his children wrapped up in his madness? Or was Georgia just pretending to believe in the delusions because she was scared of her father?

"I know you think you know we're mad. America did at first, and so did Florida, Ana, and all of them. But...they came around. We hope you will, too." America said. Hawai‘i nodded.

"Okay...may I leave now?" she asked, careful to keep her voice polite so as not to anger the madman in front of her.

"Of course you can. Meri won't say it, but this is your home now, too. You can come and go as you please." America said, a soft smile on his face but worry in his eyes.

He didn't look mad. He looked normal.

That was more terrifying than anything. Why couldn't he look mad? Why couldn't he just look like the terrible person he was? Why did he have to be so painfully normal?

Hawai‘i nodded and stepped away, walking to her room as she tried to process everything.

America was mad. That much was clear. He was convinced that he had multiple people in his head who could speak to him and control his body. Or he was convinced he was multiple people. Either way, it was scary. Hawai‘i briefly considered the idea that America could

be possessed by some sort of demon but quickly put aside that thought.

Countryhumans were supposed to be holy. So America couldn't be possessed.

He was just mad.

Hawai‘i had said before that living with Britain could be enough to drive a man mad, but she wasn't truly serious when she said that. But was Britain the one to drive America mad, or was he mad from the beginning?

Hawai‘i didn't know how to feel.

How could she not have seen this before? So what if this explanation made sense? So what if she had commented before that sometimes America's moods—America's madness—made him act like different people?

You couldn't just have multiple people in the same body, even if it was just a country thing.

That's not how it worked. That's not how any of it worked.

America had to be mad.

It was the only thing that made sense.

Right?

The Time Spent in a Gilded Cage

Happy birthday, Lost! I hope that this oneshot is everything you dreamed of. It took so long to write, but I love it so much, and I am so glad you gave me enough brainrot for this! This is my longest oneshot, with over 23k words!!

August 16, 1812

The grass felt nice under his fingers. A breeze ruffled his hair and danced between the feathers of his tiny wings, and the territory dug his fingers into the dirt.

The sensations of everything—touch, smell, taste—were all so incredible that he couldn't help but indulge in the small luxuries of the world he had never experienced from a body that was his own, a body that had his wings, that was all his.

Michigan knew it was odd that he now had a body when he hadn't become a state, but he didn't care. He could finally hug his dad, a proper hug, not one in their shared mental state.

Michigan was so excited!

The territory flapped his down-covered wings, enjoying the sensation of the air on them. The territory tucked his wings under his arms to check how many flight feathers he had, enjoying the feeling of touch on his wings.

"A personification?" a woman's voice said from behind him. Michigan untucked his wings and turned around, smiling. The women looked shocked to see him, which made sense, as Michigan wasn't supposed to have a body.

"Hi, I'm Michigan! You're one of my people! Do you know where my governor is? Or my father, America?" Michigan asked, walking up to her. The woman gaped a bit more before regaining her composure.

"Hello. I'm Helga. I can take you to your governor," she said, holding out her hand. Michigan took it, and as soon as Helga's skin touched his own, he almost burst into tears. It felt so lovely and wonderful, and it was Michigan's new favorite sensation.

Of course, he had felt touch before when he controlled his dad's body, but this was different—it was better.

It was wonderful.

Helga guided Michigan into what he knew in his gut was Detriot, as many of the townspeople stared at the territory, who waved shyly, pressing closer to Helga.

"It's okay." She whispered. Michigan nodded.

"I know, they're mine. I've just never met this many people before," Michigan whispered back, waving excitedly at a nearby horse. Helga smiled and led Michigan to a building where some British soldiers were standing outside. Michigan pressed closer to Helga.

"Why are they here? *Why are they here?*" He asked, voice panicked. Helga shot him a concerned look.

"You don't know what happened?" She asked. Michigan shook his head. He and his family knew—there were threats at the border, but—

Michigan felt sick.

"I know we're at war with Britain and the British American colonies, but not...not why there are soldiers in my land," Michigan said. Helga gave him a mournful look.

"Michigan, Governor Hull's surrendered your land to Britain," Helga said, and Michigan froze, horror rushing through his veins, as he let go of Helga's hand and stumbled backward.

He had been surrendered. *His governor had surrendered his land, and Britain was here.*

Then another thing hit him.

This was why he had a body now.

"No...no he...he..." Michigan stared at Helga, "Where's my governor?"

"With Britain, negotiating your surrender. I know...I know this is a nasty surprise, but I can sneak you out of Detriot and help get you to your father if you don't..." Helga shot a nervous look at the soldiers. Michigan clenched his fists, wings fluttering nervously. Michigan exhaled, and then he made his decision.

"I have to talk to m...I have to stay. I *can't* leave them." Michigan said, gesturing to his people as his voice broke slightly. Helga nodded, tears appearing in the corners of his eyes, making Michigan wonder if she was a mother.

"Then let's go," Helga said, gesturing toward the soldiers. Michigan nodded, trying to smile confidently at her, but Helga just looked sad. They approached the soldiers, who shot each other strange looks as they noticed Michigan.

"Who are—" Michigan cut the soldier off, stepping forward and putting on his most commanding voice.

"I'm the Territory of Michigan, and you're going to let me see my governor!" Michigan said, narrowing his eyes. The soldiers looked slightly shocked and bemused but stood aside to let Michigan in. They stopped Helga.

"She's coming too!" Michigan said, and the soldiers stood aside to let her in.

"I've never seen grown men give into the demands of a child like that," Helga said. Michigan smiled before he realized that five countryhumans and his governor were staring at him.

"Who are you?" one of the countryhumans asked, his face and dress

making it clear he belonged to one of the Indian tribes. The other four were British. One's height made it clear he was Britain, and the dragon features on another made it evident that that countryhuman was Wales.

The other two had Britain's flag, meaning they were colonies, most likely Upper and Lower Canada, with the older one being Lower Canada.

"This is Michigan," Helga said as Michigan waved. The room stared at him in shock.

"I wasn't aware that the Territory of Michigan had a personification," Britain said.

"Neither did I." Governor Hull responded with some emotion that Michigan thought might be fear in his eyes.

"I got a body today," Michigan said. Britain's expression changed from suspicion to intrigue, and Michigan quickly added, "But my Dad's America!"

Britain sighed at that and turned to Governor Hull, "Regardless of who his parents are and when he was born, I believe you were surrendering the territory to me, which means I'll be taking him."

"You can't take him!" Helga exclaimed. Britain raised an eyebrow.

"I captured his territory; therefore, the personification is mine. I'm sure Michigan knows that." Britain said, gesturing to me. Michigan scowled.

"Technically, yes," Michigan said, crossing his arms.

"Technicalities have nothing to do with it. That's how it is. You should have left when we didn't know about you. Now that we do, we have to take you," Wales added, his voice expressing some regret, as Britain glared at him.

"You can't take him! America will kill me if you take his son." Governor Hull begged.

"You should have thought of that before you surrendered, and you should have fought to keep him," The Indian personification said.

"Michigan will be coming with us," Britain said before nodding to Upper Canada and Lower Canada. Lower Canada walked over and grabbed Michigan's arm, preventing the territory from running, while Upper Canada shot him a kind smile.

Despite his fear, Michigan nodded, knowing that he would not be able to run away from this.

"It's okay, Governor Hull. Dad will get me back." Michigan said, although his voice was uncertain and shaky.

"Yes, I'm sure. Now, Lower Canada, if you and your son could take my grandson back to camp and get him adjusted, Mr. Hull, Confederacy, and I will finish up here." Britain said. Michigan wanted to yell at Britain, to tell the Empire that Michigan was not his grandfather, but held his tongue, knowing that this wasn't the right place. He had to look strong for Helga. And to show Britain that Michigan wasn't afraid of him (even though he was).

Lower Canda began gently tugging Michigan out the door.

Michigan felt cold, and he wished he had never gotten a body. He wished he was still safe in his father's head, where he was never alone. Lower Canada's grip on his arm was warm, and despite his fear, Michigan still wanted to cry tears of joy at the touch. He didn't understand! Why did he crave this stupid sensation, especially from an enemy?

Lower Canada's hand eventually let go of his arm, but Upper Canada grabbed his hand before Michigan could even think about running.

"America was my dad," Upper Canada said, and Michigan looked confused, wondering where this was going. "And he was terrible to me. He would have been terrible to you, too. Grandfather and Papa are going to help you. You'll see."

Michigan felt his anger rise. His dad was great. For seven years,

Michigan had watched from his Dad's eyes as he guided Michigan's siblings through life. Michigan watched as his dad did his best to parent him and his other siblings without bodies despite the risk of being called insane and locked away by his government. Upper Canada didn't know what he was talking about.

"My Dad is great! He loves me, and he'll take me back soon," Michigan said confidently, feeling bolder now that Britain wasn't here. Britain was scary, and he was the only person Michigan knew who really scared his Dad, and his Dad wasn't afraid of anything!

Upper Canada just gave Michigan a sad look, squeezing his hand, causing Michigan to blink and stare down at their clasped hands. That was an interesting sensation he had never felt before.

"Why'd you do that?" Michigan asked. Lower Canada gave a little laugh.

"Your brother is trying to comfort you." He said.

"America is not my father!" Upper Canada insisted.

"I know Upper. But Michigan needs family right now, and it'll be a long time before he recognizes his grandfather as family." Lower Canada said.

"I won't recognize Britain as my grandfather! Not ever!" Michigan said, spreading out his wings. Lower Canada just smiled strangely.

"Yes, you will. Since you're our ward now, Father will want you to call him that. He loves his family, and you need a better role model than America. I can't even begin to imagine what his parenting skills are like." Lower Canada said with a laugh.

Michigan opened his mouth, prepared to yell about how great his dad was with all of them. Still, he paused, remembering how many times he'd felt his father's fear of Britain finding out about the States and hurting them, his fear about being locked away because he talked to the territories in his head, and Michigan shut his mouth.

He couldn't defend his father from that insult.

And Michigan had just become what his father feared most.

A child of America, kidnapped by Britain.

Michigan wanted to cry. He didn't want to hurt his dad! He didn't mean for this to happen! He should have run away when Helga had given him the chance. He shouldn't have insisted on seeing his governor so badly after seeing the soldiers there.

Michigan messed up badly and was so scared about what would happen next.

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Michigan didn't know where he was. After being taken back to the camp by Upper and Lower Canada, he was guarded by the two until exhaustion eventually came, and he fell asleep.

When he woke, he was on a horse. Britain was behind him, one hand on Michigan's side to keep the small boy from falling off the horse. Michigan lifted his head drowsily, looked around, and spotted Upper Canada traveling with them.

"Good morning, Michigan," Britain said, his tone kind.

"Where am I?" Michigan asked, his voice full of panic. He could...Michigan was almost sure they were still in his land, but they were no longer near Detroit with the soldiers.

Michigan was scared.

"We're on our way to Upper Canada's home, in his colony. You'll be staying there with Upper Canada. He'll look after you until England arrives." Britain said. Michigan scowled.

"Why can't I be in my land?" Michigan asked. Britain smiled.

"There's going to be fighting and violence. I don't want you to get caught up in that and get hurt. You're very young, and it's better to keep you out of the way," Britain said. Michigan shifted nervously.

"But what about when my dad retakes my land?" Michigan asked,

unsure whether he would get in trouble for that question. Britain scowled and released Michigan, prompting the territory to scramble to find something to hold on to so as not to fall off the horse.

"If that ever happens, you'll be returned during whatever treaty is signed, ending the war," Britain said. It's much safer for you than staying in Detriot, so I suggest you thank me for considering your safety."

Michigan didn't thank him. Michigan told him to go to hell.

That made Britain very angry, and before Michigan could even react, Britain's fist hit the side of his head, stunning Michigan as he slumped over. Michigan almost fell off the horse before Britain righted him.

"Apologies, Michigan, but you need to learn your manners sooner rather than later. It might be hard with the...individuals that make up your populace being who they are, but don't worry, you'll learn eventually. Everyone always does." Britain said, his voice still sounding kind, if a little condescending, even after he hit Michigan so hard, everything looked fuzzy.

Michigan hated him. He didn't want to be with him! Michigan wanted his dad. He wanted this to all be some nightmare.

But the pain in his head was real.

"My people...there's nothing wrong with them!" Michigan insisted. Britain let out an amused laugh.

"Michigan, your people are mainly Indians and Americans, two groups that have no sense of manners or how the world is supposed to work. They're not as great as you think. It's proper you want to defend them but don't. They'll only hurt you." Britain said.

"My dad beat you, so he must–" Michigan was cut off by another blow, surprisingly strong for the close proximity between Michigan and Britain. Britain then began lecturing Michigan in a harsh tone.

"Michigan, I know you don't know how things work in my house, so let me inform you. I tolerate no disrespect towards me. You're my

territory and a part of my empire, meaning you will respect me. No disrespect towards the other three personifications of Great Britain is allowed either. As a territory, you will learn to listen to those who know better. You may be a personification, but you are still a child and don't understand the world in the way you claim you do. You will obey me, as it is your job as my territory, too. Lastly, I am your grandfather, regardless of what delusional ideas my wayward son has put into your head, and you will treat me and address me as such. Understood?"

"You're not my gra–" another blow cut off Michigan, and then a strange feeling came over him. Everything felt muted and dull, and it was almost like being back in his father's head again, except...it didn't feel comforting. It felt oppressive and seemed to press down on every part of Michigan's being, making his limbs heavy.

Michigan was tired.

When his awareness returned, Michigan was no longer on a horse but in a house. His body was sore, and his head ached. It was a piercing pain that Michigan had never felt before, and he hated it.

"Good. You're awake." He heard Britain say. Michigan turned his head and winced but tried to stare up at Britian, who seemed so tall. The Empire seemed more imposing here than he did in Detroit, and a small part of Michigan wanted to shrink away.

"Where am I? What happened? What did you do?" Michigan asked. Britain stepped forward, and Michigan craned his neck to look at him.

"This is to be your bedroom. You'll have to share it with your brother, but that works out, as it means he'll be around to protect you while I'm busy with the war," Britain said.

"Protect me? From who?" Michigan asked, confused.

"From America. Like I said, grandson–"

"I'm not your grandson!" Michigan yelled, spreading his wings out in an attempt to look more intimidating. However, considering they

were covered in fuzzy down feathers, it might not have had the intended effect.

Britain didn't care about Michigan's attempt to look intimidating. Instead, he backhanded the colony so hard that Michigan lost his balance and nearly fell. Michigan reached up to grab his cheek, tears appearing in his eyes. Britain sighed and then crouched down to Michigan's height, placing a hand on Michigan's shoulder.

"Please stop making me hit you, grandson. I don't want to." Britain said. Michigan briefly considered spitting in his face but decided against it, not wanting to get hit again. It hurt, and as much as Michigan liked the caring touches of others, this touch hurt, and it made him want to cry.

"I'm not making...I'm not making you hurt me." Michigan said, shrinking away from Britain's hand. He wanted to go home. He wanted his Dad!

"I told you the rules of my house. You're the one choosing to break them, and therefore making me have to hit you to discipline you. If you just followed the rules, you'd be okay. It's not my fault you keep breaking them," Britain said, his voice gentle. Michigan wanted to cry even more now. This wasn't right! Wasn't it?

"I..." Michigan began, not sure what he wanted to say. Britain gave him a soft smile.

"Here's what we can do. How about I give you a pass on the 'calling me grandfather' rule until you feel more comfortable with it, as long as you follow the other two rules I gave you? Is that an acceptable deal?" Britain asked. Michigan paused, thinking.

On the one hand, he would have to listen to and obey Britain without speaking up for himself, but on the other hand, if he took the deal, he wouldn't be hit for refusing to call Britain his grandfather. Britain said he wouldn't be here because he would be busy with the war, so this...the deal would help keep Michigan safe.

Michigan bit his lip before nodding and sticking out a shy hand. "I'll

take the deal," he said.

Britain looked very excited and shook Michigan's hand. "Well then, Michigan, thank you for being so agreeable. I thought you would be like America and start yelling about how a perfectly reasonable agreement was a crime against you. This is a wonderful surprise."

Michigan opened his mouth, ready to defend his father, but then closed it, remembering the rules he had agreed to follow. Don't disrespect Britain; don't argue with him because he knows better.

Michigan frowned.

Maybe following these rules was going to be more challenging than he thought.

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August 30, 1812

Michigan hadn't seen Britain since he left a few days after dropping him off at Upper Canada's house. Only Upper Canada, Michigan, and a few human guards prevented Michigan from leaving the house, which was located in a small campsite nearby. Michigan hated being unable to go outside, leaving him with few things to do other than talk to Upper Canada.

Upper Canada was friendly, Michigan supposed. Things had been awkward initially, but Michigan had quickly grown to love his older brother, especially since he was so much nicer than Britain. His brother told Michigan that he was sorry Britain hurt him.

He cared about Michigan, and although he also expected Michigan to follow the rules Britain had set, he was so much nicer about it. He didn't hit Michigan; he just warned Michigan, and when Michigan woke up crying for his father, Upper Canada was there to comfort him.

Upper Canada told his story about his life, and even though they were so clearly biased against his father, Michigan listened anyway, as listening to the stories was something else to do besides listening to his thoughts and thinking about his missing siblings.

Michigan didn't know the date either, as he had lost track of time when...the weird fuzziness on the horse began. It felt like seconds, but Upper Canada insisted it was days. Michigan wasn't allowed to know any news of the war either, so his entire life was suddenly inside the house, Upper Canada, and the few books within it.

Upper Canada at least tried to keep him busy, teaching Michigan how to cook and sew and ensuring Michigan helped him do chores around the house, including cleaning up the down feathers Michigan was slowly losing.

Upper Canada was collecting the feathers, as he wanted to make Michigan a pillow out of them. Even though Michigan thought it wouldn't work very well as a pillow, Upper Canada still wanted to do it and embroider it, as, in his words, "I'm bored and need a project to focus on."

Michigan thought it was sweet.

Upper Canada was the only good thing about being trapped here.

Michigan was glad he wasn't alone.

"Are you rereading Gulliver's Travels *again*?" Upper Canada asked. Michigan nodded from his spot on the bed, wings wrapped around him, not even looking up from the book.

"Maybe I am. There's nothing else to do." Michigan complained. Upper Canada sighed and went to sit next to Michigan.

"Why do you like that one more than all the others?" Upper Canada. Michigan froze, unsure how to answer the question without getting in trouble.

Gulliver's Travels is about many things, but one of the core things that keeps coming up in the book is Gulliver feeling lost and overwhelmed in an unfamiliar new environment.

Like Michigan was here.

"I just like it," Michigan eventually said. Upper Canada stared at Michigan as if he didn't believe him but didn't say anything, and the

two sat in comfortable silence.

"I'm glad I have you as a brother." Upper Canada then said, startling Michigan out of his book.

"What?" Michigan asked.

"I'm glad I have you as a brother. I've...I've always wanted a brother, but Vermont died before I was born, and he died because of America, but now I have you. You're going to die eventually when you go back to America, and I don't want you to die because it's less loney when you're here with me." Upper Canada blurted, his voice getting faster and faster as he spoke.

Michigan stared at him, unsure of how to react to that.

"I..." Michigan said, trying to keep himself from blurting out that Vermont was alive and happy, "I...I think you're great too. I'm glad I got to meet you, too."

Michigan was pretty sure he meant it, too. Upper Canada was nothing like Britain, and the older boy was clearly trying his best to make sure Michigan was comfortable. Upper Canada looked so happy that Michigan briefly forgot that they were enemies.

"When our grandfather lets us go outside again—when we're safe from America, I'm going to take you out on my boats and show you why I love them." Upper Canada said, his voice full of a happy conviction, and Michigan didn't have the heart to tell Upper Canada that he would be retaken by his father quickly.

He hoped. Truth be told, Michigan had no idea if his father was coming for him, as he didn't know how the war was going. But Michigan believed his father and his siblings were coming for him.

But when the war ended...maybe it wouldn't be impossible to convince his dad to let Upper Canada come and hang out with Michigan.

"That sounds nice, Upper. I'd like that." Michigan said. Upper Canada smiled brightly and hugged Michigan, squeezing him tightly.

"Ach! Upp—too tight!" Michigan got out, and Upper Canada let go, smiling sheepishly.

"Sorry. I'm just excited. My father and my grandfather, they're great. And there are plenty of other colonies in America, like Nova Scotia. But they're busy a lot...and...it's nice to have someone just to be around." Upper Canada smiled, bumping his shoulder gently against Michigan's, "I'll try to see if I can get Grandfather to let you go outside. I think...I know...I trust you not to leave, and we have his soldiers here looking after us who can supervise, so I think I can convince him."

"Why not ask your dad?" Michigan asked. Upper Canada laughed.

"He's not in charge. Grandfather is. Major decisions are always run through him, regardless of whose land it technically is. Sure, we're on my land, but it will always be Grandfather's before it is mine. And besides, I'm a colony. Making decisions like that isn't right. I'm not smart enough or able to make decisions like that on my own."

"That's not right." Michigan muttered, thinking about how his dad's government was created to make sure that his states not only got a say in their land but a say in his dad's land overall. A place where your opinion didn't matter, and the only thing that mattered was how obedient you were, how happy you made someone who didn't seem to care about you.

It was horrible.

And yet Michigan had no choice but to be a part of it. Michigan never had a choice because his stupid Governor signed him away so quickly that Michigan didn't even get to say goodbye.

At least he had Upper Canada, and someone here cared. Michigan didn't know what he would do otherwise or how he would handle being captured if no one cared for him.

Upper Canada was all Michigan had.

Michigan only wished he wasn't his enemy.

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September 30, 1812

Despite the guard's best efforts, Michigan and Upper Canada faced growing boredom as they ran out of things to do. As the leaves began to signal to the two personifications the coming of fall, they finally received a visitor.

Unfortunately for Michigan, that visitor was from Britain.

"Hello, Michigan, Upper Canada. Your wings look lovely with all the fuzzy feathers gone," Britain said. Michigan crossed his arms.

"It's called down," Michigan said, biting back a snarky remark. Britain looked a bit annoyed by that, but he didn't hit Michigan and instead turned to Upper Canada.

"How is he?" Britain asked like Michigan wasn't there.

"He's bored, we both are, but other than that, he's been well-behaved and hasn't tried running away or anything of the sort." Upper Canada said, his voice scarily blank.

"Thank you." Britain said, causing an excited expression to cross Upper Canada's face, "And I think I have some things that will help alleviate your boredom. You did teach him how to sew, right Upper Canada?"

Michigan's brother nodded.

"Good, good. Now the first thing is some of your school work, Upper Canada. I want you to begin teaching Michigan all the courses expected of a British colony. I know you won't do a good job, but you can try your best, and I'll fix your mistakes once this whole thing is over," Britain said.

"But I'm not a British colony. My dad's taking back my land, and I'll be returned to him once the war is over." Michigan said. Britain's face changed, and he looked...sad.

"Michigan...did no one tell you?" Britain asked. Michigan paled.

"Told me what?" He asked, fear in his voice. Did his dad give him

up? Was the war over?

"America has continued campaigns in British America, but he hasn't tried to get back your land at all. Why, I've been fighting on those fronts myself. America's not there. He's not trying to get you back," Britain said. Michigan shook his head, panic welling up in his throat, threatening to choke him.

"No...no, you're a liar. Dad's trying to get me back. I know it!" Michigan said, his hands curling into fists. He fought back the tears welling up. If not his dad, then his Uncle James or his siblings would do something! They wouldn't leave him behind.

Britain sighed, some emotion Michigan couldn't decipher on his face.

"Michigan, my boy, if America really wanted you, don't you think he would have stopped the handover or prevented us from taking you home when it did happen?"

Britain's voice was so gentle. Michigan hated it.

"Dad didn't know! But Dad loves me; he does. He's coming for me. You just haven't seen him yet!" Michigan said, grasping desperately at something, anything that proved Britain wrong. His dad had to be coming for Michigan. He *had* to be.

"Michigan, I'm not sure about that. I'm not trying to hurt you; I just want to tell you the truth about what's happening in your land. I know it's not news you want to hear, but that's the reality of the situation," Britain said.

"My father will come for me. I know it. He's a great dad like that!" Michigan still argued although he was beginning to wonder whether he was trying to convince Britain or himself.

"I can't speak much on America as a parent, but I can tell you that he's not as great of a person as you might think," Britain said. Michigan crossed his arms and scowled.

"Is that because he won a war against you before, just like he'll win this one?" Michigan snapped, earning him a hard slap across his

face that left his cheeks stinging. What hurt the most was that Upper Canada had done nothing to stop Britain and instead just looked down at his feet like he was trying to pretend this wasn't happening.

Did he actually not care about Michigan? Or was he trying to avoid being hit himself?

Michigan didn't know, and it scared him.

"No, it's not that. Do you know who New Sweden is?" Briain asked as if he hadn't just slapped Michigan. Michigan nodded, holding his hand to his cheek where he had been slapped.

Delaware talked about being New Sweden a lot, especially when interrogating Dad and Uncle James, and even interrogated Miss Rebecca about a made-up man he was convinced was a nation living with him as New Sweden. New York, the replacement of New Netherlands, was convinced Delaware was misremembering things, and Michigan believed New York.

"Well, do you know how he died?" Britain asked. Michigan shook his head, a pit growing in his stomach.

"He was killed by your father—" Britain began before Michigan cut him off.

"YOU'RE A LIAR!" He yelled. His father wouldn't kill New Sweden! Dad adopted New Sweden's replacement!

Unless he killed New Sweden so he could adopt the replacement, a small voice whispered in Michigan's head. Michigan tried to push it away, anger mixing with a distressed panic that made him want to cry.

"I'm not lying," Britain said, thankfully not hitting Michigan for yelling at him. He seemed sad, not angry or anything else Michigan was expecting, "I know it's hard to believe people you care about can do bad things, but this isn't a lie. I need you to understand the kind of person America is before you run around defending him."

"No...my dad's not like that...he's not," Michigan said, hugging his arms around himself. Britain turned to Upper Canada and nodded

his head. Upper Canada peeled himself off the wall, came over to Michigan, hugged him, and mumbled apologies in his ear.

"I know this is hard for you, Michigan, but I promise it's for the better," Britain said, smiling kindly. Michigan resisted the urge to punch it off.

But Britain had to be lying. Michigan's dad wouldn't do anything like that.

Right?

No, his Dad wouldn't. This was a lie, a trick by Britain to get Michigan to turn against his dad.

Michigan wouldn't fall for it. He just has to do his best to ignore all the terrible things Britain said until his Dad comes for him, and then he would be with his family again!

Michigan just had to ignore Britain's lies.

He just had to do his best to survive this occupation in one piece.

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October 14, 1812

Michigan hated it when Britain visited. It meant that he had to watch what he said and did and was expected to remember random facts from what his brother was teaching him. Michigan had managed to avoid getting beaten for any mistakes and instead just got slapped or insulted, but it still made him nervous.

Michigan wished, not for the first time, that countries could not travel anywhere in their land instantaneously and instead were bound to the same rules of travel as humans. Then it would just be him and his brother and the guards, no Britain stopping by whenever he pleased. Michigan would feel safer.

But he wasn't that lucky.

Thankfully, the lessons Michigan was learning seemed to make

Britain really happy, so Michigan threw himself fully into them, knowing that keeping Britain happy until (*if* a small traitorous part of him whispered) his dad came for him.

Michigan also thinks it was meant to act as a distraction, as Michigan was kept so busy with the lessons and then pleasing Britain by showing off what he had been learning that he never had any time to ask about the war.

Not that they told him anything to begin with.

"I am pleased with how well your lessons have been going," Britain said during his most recent visit, placing his hand on Michigan's head and patting it. Michigan fought down the urge to push it off, knowing from past experience that it would only result in him being hit again.

"Thank you, Britain." Michigan said, knowing it expected of him to thank Britain, before deciding to tack on a compliment in hopes of getting Britain to leave quicker, "It has been nice to have something else to do."

"Yes, I'm sure. However, you should have some work experience in addition to your education," Britain said. Michigan perked up instantly.

"I can go outside?" He asked. Britain laughed, and Michigan deflated.

"Of course not. You won't be safe, so young and unable to take care of yourself. I was talking about another form of work. You can sew, can't you?" Britain asked. Michigan nodded, "Good, good."

"Why do you ask?" Michigan asked.

"You're going to help mend uniforms for my soldiers," Britain said. Michigan froze, fear flooding his body.

He couldn't do that—he couldn't help the enemy, betray his family, or work against his father!

Michigan couldn't do that.

Yet, as he opened his mouth to express that, he was seized by fear, which crept up his throat, choking him and rendering him unable to speak. If he disobeyed, he would be hurt. If he did what Britain said, he wouldn't be hurt, but he would be betraying his family's trust. What if they hated him for doing that?

What if...what if...

Michigan pushed aside the little voice that had been doubting his father ever since Britain told them about New Sweden.

Britain was a liar. Michigan couldn't trust him; regardless of the fear, he *couldn't* work for him.

"I won't!" Michigan protested, "I won't betray my family for you!"

Britain's face turned furious, and Michigan felt his fear increase.

"How dare you! I save you, I give you a home and food, I give you education and care, and you treat me this way? I'm your family, too!" Britain said before grabbing Michigan's arm and throwing the colony to the ground before he began kicking Michigan. Michigan curled in on himself, trying to protect himself from the blows, as he sobbed.

Michigan wanted to go *home*. He wanted his dad! Why wasn't his dad here? Why wasn't anyone coming to save him?

Eventually, Britain stopped, and Michigan continued to lie on the floor, sobbing.

Then, a gentle hand on his shoulder. Michigan's chest heaved, and, believing it to be Upper Canada, he threw himself onto the figure, pulling them into a hug as he sobbed. The figure hugged Michigan's back, gentle and warm, and Michigan sank into it.

"I know it hurts my boy," Britain's voice said, and Michigan stilled as he realized the person he was hugging like his life depended on it was not, in fact, his brother but the very man who caused him so much pain. "But I know you don't want to have these outbursts. It's not your fault you're made up of all those illogical savages. Once we have everything settled, I'll take care of that for you. That way, you

won't have these outbursts anymore."

"What savages? The Indians?" Michigan couldn't help but ask, confused.

"And America's people, yes. Of course, such backward people like them would make it hard for you to think clearly." Britain said.

"My people don't cau–" Michigan was cut off when Britain tightened his grip on him and squeezed the newly formed bruises.

"Of course, you don't think they do. A man born with problems won't recognize his problems as problems. But don't worry; I'll help you understand your problems and then fix them for you." Britain said.

"But...but...you hur..." Michigan started, trailing off as he tried to think of a way to explain his feelings that wouldn't end with Britain hurting him.

"I only hurt you because you made me. I don't want to do it. It pains me to have to hurt you like this, but there's no other way to help you fix these outbursts until your land is firmly in my hands. But if you would just *behave* and stop this, Michigan, I wouldn't have to hurt you." Britain said.

He sounded...he sounded upset. He sounded hurt, and he sounded like he...

Was Michigan wrong? Was this...was this...

Michigan didn't know what to think.

He...everything was just so confusing and stupid!

How could Britain hurt Michigan so badly and then give him one of the nicest and warmest hugs he had ever had?

Michigan wanted to sob and scream and...and...

Michigan didn't know what to do. So he just burrowed into the hug and took advantage of the kindness he was being shown.

He didn't know what else to do.

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November 17, 1812

Michigan stared at his brother as he tried his best to remember everything being said. It was hard for Michigan to do on a normal day, but recently, Michigan's thoughts had been elsewhere.

He had been trying to ignore all the stuff Britain kept saying about his dad and put it aside, but no matter how hard he tried, it just kept coming back and consuming his thoughts.

Michigan didn't know what to think about it all. He wanted to protest it, insist his father was in the right and that Britain was a liar. But...but he couldn't. Michigan had no proof Britain was lying. Even though he had lived in his father's head for seven years, Michigan hadn't heard anything that could prove otherwise.

It made it very hard to convince himself Britain was lying and to push it aside. The longer it went on, the harder it became for Michigan to convince himself that there was no way that it could be true.

Maybe it was true, and maybe his dad was a terrible person.

And that terrified Michigan because he knew his dad wasn't a terrible person.

Right?

"Alright, what's wrong, little brother?" Upper Canada then said, cutting himself off mid-lecture. Michigan froze, not wanting to answer that.

How could he admit doubt in his father after all this? Then again, it was Upper Canada. Michigan trusted him...and if anyone would understand, it had to be him. America was his father, too.

"I..." Michigan began before trailing off, swallowing his nerves, "I'm just thinking about what Britain said about Dad. I can't get my mind

off it."

"The thing about New Sweden?" Upper Canada asked, his voice gentle as he sat next to Michigan. Michigan nodded, wrapping his wing around his brother.

"I can't...I can't believe my dad would do that!" Michigan said, voice breaking.

"Then why are you doubting him? If you believe so strongly that *America* is a good person, then why are you doubting him?" Upper Canada asked, his tone venomous as he mentioned their father.

"I don't...I don't..." Michigan trailed off, not having an answer. Why did he doubt his father if he knew he was a good person?

"You know he's not a good person. You're just in denial because he raised you and because a lot of your people are his. If you... didn't have that, you would know he's a bad person," Upper Canada said. Michigan pulled his legs to his chest, tucked himself into a ball, and thought.

Was his brother right? Did he really only think his dad was a good person because he lived with him? Because his people loved his dad?

No...no, that couldn't be right. Michigan had been in Dad's head with everyone else. Nothing there indicated he was a bad person. That had to be proof that his dad was a good person. It had to be.

But that was his dad's head...he could be biased...maybe...

"Uppy? Why don't you like Dad?" Michigan asked before he lost the confidence to.

"He...America disowned me as soon as he found out I existed. He told me he didn't want to have a son with Canada and that I was an insult to his existence because I'm British. Everything about my existence didn't matter to him because he never cared who I was or what I wanted. All he cared about was his reputation, as if he had one, to begin with. He hated me because of all the things I couldn't control. He hated me for wanting to stay with the family he

betrayed and tried to kill. He..." Upper Canada trailed off, and Michigan sat there, head swirling.

That didn't sound like his dad. That didn't sound like his dad at all.

But Upper Canada looked so upset, and Michigan knew his brother wasn't a liar, so was that the truth? Was his dad really that awful and nasty to people who weren't his states? If he hated Upper Canada for being British, would he hate Michigan for being British right now, even if it was against his will?

Nausea burned in Michigan's stomach as his mind ran through all the terrible scenarios that could come out of his reunion with his father if what Upper Canada said was true.

None of that...that...some of it had to be exaggerated, some of it had to be false.

His dad would never treat any of his kids that way.

And yet, it was getting harder for Michigan to convince himself of that.

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December 21, 1812

Michigan would never admit it to anyone, but he enjoyed the monotony of helping to repair and fix uniforms for British soldiers. Sure, it was to help his...his...his maybe enemies, but it was a break from all the lessons and allowed Michigan and Upper Canada to talk or, at the very least, enjoy each other's company.

It would be nice if Michigan could ignore the conflicting thoughts of loyalty. It would be nice if Michigan's head weren't filled with new and unpleasant revelations about Am–Dad.

Upper Canada hadn't pushed the topic and hadn't asked him about his dad since their talk...however long ago it was. Michigan still had no idea what time it was or if the war was over or not.

However, as the days went on, Michigan found himself caring less

and less about that. It was easier just to pretend this was all there was, his brother and him existing together.

Aside from Britain's visits. Britain was insistent on asking Michigan every time he stopped by now if he was ready to call him grandfather. Michigan still wasn't ready, but the other rules had become easier to follow, so he got hit less and began to know Britain more as a person rather than just the scary monster from his dad's stories.

Michigan was beginning to doubt if keeping secret was really all that good. Sure, Britain wasn't great, but Michigan would have never met Upper Canada without him, and it was tough for Michigan to see a future without Upper Canada in some way, even if it was just them writing to each other because Michigan was taken back by A–Dad.

Speaking of which...

"Uppy?" Michigan asked cautiously, looking up from his sewing.

"Hmm? What do you need, Mitch?" Upper Canada asked, setting aside his sewing and looking at Michigan, who averted his eyes back to his sewing, hoping his cheeks weren't red.

"If...if Dad doesn't...if I stay British, do you think your father would adopt me?" Michigan asked nervously.

"Mitch, does that mean—"

"America's still my dad! I was just...wondering." Michigan said, sure that his cheeks were red with embarrassment now. Michigan continued his sewing, not daring to look up at Upper Canada.

"He would, Michigan. You're family to us, even if you're afraid to bring it up to many of us. Even...even if you still want *that man* to be your father, Dad wouldn't mind adopting you. I'd love to have you be my brother through the father who is actually kind," Upper Canada said. Michigan looked up, and Upper Canada was smiling at him.

"Really?" Michigan asked, tone skeptical. Upper Canada nodded.

"You're family, Mitch, despite America. You're better than him in every way, and I'm sure they'll agree once everyone else meets you. Whether or not you're a son of America or a son of Canada." Upper Canada said. Michigan nodded and went back to his sewing.

He wished Upper Canada said no.

That would have made everything easier.

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January 31, 1813

Britain was back. He seemed happy and sped through his regular review of Michigan's lessons as if he weren't here for that.

It was weird and unlike Britain or, at least, what Michigan knew of him. Michigan knew something was up, but he couldn't figure out what.

Finally, Britain sighed.

"I have a feeling you both know that something has happened." Britain began, "Just based on my demeanor."

Michigan and Upper Canada nodded, and Britain gave them a small smile, one that Michigan knew was genuine.

"We've recently won a large battle against America. Michigan, I don't think it's likely that you will be returned to him." Britain said, looking at Michigan with judging yet kind eyes.

"I..." Michigan began before trailing off, not sure how to react. A few months ago (or what felt like it), Michigan would have been distraught and probably hit for his unruly behavior, but now, after everything he's learned here.

Michigan didn't know how to think or feel. On one hand, there was Britain, and on the other, Dad-merica. However, there was also Illinois and his other siblings to think about. But Upper Canada was here.

So Michigan didn't know how to feel.

"That's...good to know," Michigan eventually answered, expecting Britain to be happy with the answer and leave. What he didn't expect was a concerned glance from the empire, who crouched down to meet Michigan's eyes.

"Are you alright, grandson?" Britain asked. Michigan nodded, and Britain frowned, "I expected you to be more upset by the news, not...this."

"I..." Michigan began again, but still unsure of how to express himself, he shot a helpless glance at Upper Canada.

"Michigan has been dealing with a lot of new information about his dad, and he's not ready to talk about it," Upper Canada explained.

"Is that true, Michigan?" Britain asked. Michigan bit his lip and nodded.

"I want to be upset...but..." Michigan trailed off, gesturing with his hands as if he could magically give Britain an explanation. Britain just smiled and nodded.

"That's okay, Michigan. I hope you're able to figure out your confusion," he said. Michigan took a step back in surprise.

"You're...you're not going to...are you going to ask me more about it?" Michigan asked.

"Do you want me to?"

"No...yes...I don't know!" Michigan said before it all came pouring out, "Dad's not the person I thought he was if you're telling the truth, but you're a liar, so how do I know you're being honest and then there's the fact that I don't know if I want my dad or family here and I don't know!"

"You can still have us as a family even if you still want America to be your dad. I won't make you give him up to call me grandfather," Britain said. Michigan looked suspiciously at him.

"Really?" He asked. Britain smiled again.

"Of course not. You're still family to be, regardless of issues with America." Britain said, "You have family here, and for the time being, you have family in America."

"I...I guess. Are you sure it's okay?" Michigan asked, not wanting to be beaten for a misunderstanding. Britain nodded.

"Of course it is. I want you to be a part of my family." He said. Michigan then nodded.

"Okay...grandfather," Michigan said. His grandfather smiled and pulled him into a hug.

"Even British, you aren't without family. Remember that, my boy." Grandfather said, pulling back from the hug while smiling, his eyes full of kindness.

Michigan nodded.

His grandfather was right. He wasn't alone or without family here.

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February 5, 1813

Michigan was sure there was no safer place on earth than by his grandfather's side.

Michigan's grandfather, the mighty British Empire, had arrived the day before, and very soon after, a blissful calmness spread over Michigan's body, making it hard for the British territory to think clearly. Luckily, his grandfather, constantly aware of when there was a problem with one of his colonies, arrived quickly and helped clear everything up for Michigan.

The pleasant calmness was still there but more muted, making it easier for Michigan to think.

Despite the war, his grandfather also decided to stay a few days to ensure Michigan was alright and nothing terrible would happen.

Apparently, his grandfather was starting to lose control of Michigan's land to his dad, and his grandfather confessed that he was scared that he would lose control of Michigan to America. Seeing his grandfather choose to be so vulnerable in front of him, especially after how rude Michigan had been, made Michigan start to cry.

His grandfather quickly reassured him that it was not Michigan's fault and that Michigan didn't know any better.

It was an emotional conversation, which was why Michigan was now curled up against his grandfather's side as he dozed in and out of sleep.

"I think you want to disown America," his grandfather said, jolting Michigan out of his half-asleep state. Michigan nodded, as his grandfather was right. Michigan did want to disown his father because he was a British Colony and a loyal grandson of the British Empire.

"Don't nod; say it out loud; otherwise, people won't think you're sure in your decision," his grandfather said.

"America is no longer my father," Michigan said without hesitation, his head fuzzy. His grandfather smiled, and it filled Michigan with an overwhelming sense of happiness to know that he had done something right for once.

"You'll need a human name, too. How about Issac, in honor of the man who saved you from America; George, after our current king, and Fitzroy, my surname." Britain suggested. Michigan nodded, an almost dazed smile on his face.

"That sounds wonderful, Grandfather. Thank you," Michigan said. Why wouldn't he want to be named after the man who united him with his grandfather and saved him from America? And being named after the king was an honor! Michigan was so lucky that his grandfather thought he deserved such an honor after being so terrible to him.

"I'm glad you like it. It's important to have a name that reflects your

history as a British colony, although, unfortunately for us both, your time here looks like it will be short." Grandfather said. Michigan crossed his arms and pouted.

"I wish it wasn't. I want to be a British colony forever and ever." Michigan said. Grandfather laughed and smiled slightly at Michigan before patting the colony's head again.

"I'm glad you do. It's a shame we can't do anything more to help you...unless...but no, I couldn't ask you to do that, not so soon after disowning America," Grandfather muttered. Michigan perked up, eager to help his grandfather.

"What is it? I'm willing to do it! I'll do anything!" Michigan said excitedly, ready to prove himself. Grandfather's grin widened.

"Anything?"

"Yeah, I wanna help!" Michigan chirped. Grandfather smiled.

"Well then, how about you tell me anything you know about America that can be used against him." Grandfather said. Michigan nodded, pulling away from his Grandfather's side as he straightened his back.

"America's still very scared of you. He doesn't like talking to you because he still feels like a colony around you. You make him feel weak, and he has a hard time acting like a country around you," Michigan began, causing Grandfather to laugh, his face wide with a grin.

"Is that so? Oh, it's good to know that son of mine still understands his place in the world. Unfortunately, he's still been corrupted by people like France–both of them, but that at least means he shows promise once he comes home." Grandfather said.

"Does that mean America would have to become my dad again?" Michigan asked. Michigan didn't want America to be his dad! Michigan was a loyal grandson of the British Empire, and he didn't want to be associated with a rebellious traitor who knew what he

was doing was wrong and did it anyway.

"No, no, don't worry my grandson. America and any other kids he has won't be his once he returns to me. He lost the right to that when he rebelled. I can have Lower Canada be your father if you end up staying. Wouldn't that be nice?" Grandfather asked. Michigan nodded, smiling.

He would love to have Lower Canada as a dad. Lower Canada was a loyal colony and helped fight against America's rebellion! He was a loyal colony like Michigan was!

"Does America have any other kids?" Grandfather then asked. Michigan nodded.

"Yes, he does," Michigan said, smiling as he thought about Illinois, his favorite brother after Upper Canada. Michigan wished Illinois was here. He would love being a British colony with Michigan and Upper Canada.

"Oh really? Other territories, I presume?" Grandfather asked. Michigan nodded.

"I wish you hadn't lost so much of my land. Then you could have gotten to my siblings' land and helped reunite them with our proper family!" Michigan said. Grandfather patted his head.

"It is a shame, isn't it? How about, if you do end up being taken by America, you tell all those territories about how nice being a British colony is and how you want to be one still?" Grandfather said, causing Michigan to nod eagerly. If his siblings knew how great Grandfather was, they would want to come live with him, too!

"I'm so glad Procter put you under martial law. It makes this all so much easier." Grandfather muttered. Michigan tilted his head to the side.

"What does that mean, Grandfather?" Michigan asked. It sounded familiar, like something he should be worried about, but whenever he tried to think about it, the strange fuzziness returned and made

it hard for him to remember.

"Oh, nothing. It's just something that helps my colonies become better colonies. Don't question me about things like that again. You're a colony, so you don't need to worry about politics and things like that; you just need to do whatever I ask of you." Grandfather said. The fuzziness cleared, and Michigan nodded.

"I understand, Grandfather," Michigan said, smiling happily.

He was glad that his Grandfather and his grandfather's people cared enough about Michigan to do things that helped him become a better British colony.

Michigan just wished that America's army wasn't getting so close to taking him back. Michigan didn't want to go back. He was a British colony, and he belonged with, and to, his grandfather.

"America scares you, doesn't he?" Grandfather asked. Michigan nodded.

America was at war with him and his family and was getting close to taking Michigan from them, so of course, Michigan was scared of him. Michigan wanted to be British. He never wanted to leave his grandfather, but...he wasn't given much choice, which hurt.

"I am," Michigan admitted in a whisper, leaning back into his grandfather's grip. I want to tell all his kids that they should run away from him and come to live with you, but I'm terrified of what he'll do when he catches me."

"If he catches you, you're smart, and you'll figure out a way around things to keep yourself and America's other territories safe from America. I have faith in you. Just avoid America when you can and when you can't, and if safe too, let him know where your loyalties lie." Grandfather advised. Michigan nodded.

"Let America know that even though I'm supposed to be his territory, I'm loyal to my family, right Grandfather?" Michigan asked. His grandfather nodded, a broad smile on his face.

"You pick up things so quickly. Now, I think it's time for you to go

to bed. We have things we need to take care of in the morning," Grandfather said. Michigan nodded, yawning as he reluctantly pulled away from his grandfather and went to bed.

"Good night, Michigan." Upper Canada said as Michigan collapsed next to him.

"Go'd ni't," Michigan mumbled as he slipped into sleep.

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"Hold still so I can take care of those flight feathers for you," Grandfather said. A rush of panic went through Michigan as he wrapped his wings closer around himself. His flight feathers? But he needed them! He just got them!

"What?" He blurted. Grandfather frowned as Michigan's head began to grow heavy and fuzzy.

"Calm down, Michigan. You want this to happen so you can be a better British colony." Grandfather said.

Michigan was nodding before he even realized what was going on, the same fuzziness from yesterday clouding his thoughts.

"Yeah...I want this to happen. Sorry for panicking." Michigan muttered through numb lips.

"It's alright. You're still young, and like I said, we just need to finish removing America's taint from you, and then you'll be a perfect colony. This is just step one of that. The eagle is America's symbol; you can't have it if you want to be a British colony. But since I'm kind, I won't get rid of the wings; I just want to ensure they can't be used. You want that, don't you?" Grandfather said. Michigan nodded.

"Yeah...I don't want to be tainted with America's symbols...but I don't want...loosing two limbs would hurt..." Michigan said. Grandfather nodded.

"That's exactly why we're clipping your wings right now. I don't want to put you through pain like that. Maybe you can get rid of them when you're older, but this is the best option right now." Grandfather said, "So sit down and let me get started."

Michigan sat down, his fuzzy and tired mind not registering the cold as his grandfather began to snip off the flight feathers.

There was something so freeing about losing his flight feathers, like it was taking weight off Michigan's shoulders, freeing him from some invisible chain he didn't realize he had. Grandfather was right. Removing America's taint really did make him feel better, make him

feel more like a member of his family.

"I feel better," Michigan said as his grandfather finished the left wing and began clipping the feathers on the right wing.

"Good, good. You should." Grandfather said, pausing in his work to pat Michigan on the head. Michigan smiled, emotion welling up in him at just how much his Grandfather had done for him, despite America, despite Michigan having so many outbursts because all his people were stupid and uncivilized, despite all that, his grandfather still cared enough about him to still try and remove as much of that taint as possible so Michigan could be the best British colony he could be.

Grandfather was just so kind to him, and Michigan loved him for it.

"Alright, all done. That didn't hurt, did it? I admit this is my first time doing something like this, and I hope I didn't hurt you by mistake." Grandfather asked. Michigan shook his head.

"You did great, Grandfather. This...I've never felt better." Michigan said. Grandfather smiled.

"Good. Now, if America does take you back, I expect you to keep up with clipping your wings to show America where your loyalties lie. Do you understand?" Grandfather asked. Michigan nodded.

"I understand, Grandfather."

His grandfather smiled again before patting Michigan's head and leading them inside.

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April 18, 1813

Michigan hummed happily as he read through the latest book his grandfather had given him, enjoying the spring air as he leaned against his brother. There were fewer soldiers outside the house than there used to be, but the ones that remained were friendly to Michigan. He enjoyed getting to hang out with them, especially when one of them put his coat on Michigan and got the whole camp

calling him "Colonal Michigan."

"Uppy, when do you think I'll be able to move into Grandfather's house?" Michigan asked his brother.

"Probably when the war ends." Upper Canada answered absentmindedly as he read.

"But...I might not be able to stay after the war...because America might take me away from you...and I want to be able to live in the home I belong in before that happens, so I have memories of where I'm supposed to be before I am forced into a home I don't belong in." Michigan said. Upper Canada frowned and put his book down.

"Michigan, you aren't going to be forced to live with America." Upper Canada.

"Uppy, you don't have to protect me. I know...Grandfather told me that it's possible America might take me back when the war ends...I..." Michigan trailed off, not sure how to explain the fear that filled him every time he even thought about that scenario. He wanted to be with his family, not with America.

"I know, Michi. I want you to stay with us too. But with all the fighting in your land, even if you want to move into our home, you probably won't be able to. Maybe we can talk to Grandfather about letting you move into his house in London," Upper Canada said. Michigan brightened.

"Do you think I would be allowed to?" he asked. Upper Canada nodded.

"Of course, you would be able to! You're a part of the family, and moving you to London would keep you out of America's hands for as long as possible." Upper Canada said.

"How quickly could that happen? Should I pack anything? What should I—" Michigan began before his brother cut him off with a laugh.

"We still need to ask Grandfather for permission. Slow down," he said. Michigan smiled shyly and nodded.

"Right, sorry. I just got excited."

"It's alright. Grandfather will be happy that you want to live with him. I'm sure he'll say yes." Upper Canada said. Michigan looked back at his book nervously.

"Are you sure?" Michigan asked.

"Of course I am. You're one of us, Michigan. You always will be," Upper Canada said, playfully ruffling Michigan's hair. This caused the younger colony to stick out his tongue as happiness bloomed in his chest.

He had never felt like he belonged more. This was his family, his home, and Michigan was happier here than he was with America.

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June 17, 1813

Michigan had been in London with his brother for a few weeks now, and he had been able to spend time in his Grandfather's house. His Grandfather had been busy with the war, but Michigan had gotten to spend time with his Uncle England, who was teaching Michigan how to talk with his hands. That way, he could understand Uncle England without his uncle having to write everything or without making Upper Canada translate.

It was nice to see everyone doing their best to make sure Michigan fit in despite how confusing and overwhelming everything was in London.

Michigan had also grown taller. While his body was about seven when he first got it, now it seemed nine or ten. Upper Canada had joked about it, telling Michigan he would be as tall as their grandfather if he kept growing. Uncle England had told Upper Canada that it was normal for colonies to grow faster until they reached their proper height.

Michigan had laughed with Upper Canada about it, as it reminded him of—

Michigan's thoughts were cut off by a stab of pain in his head, but it faded quickly. Blinking, Michigan shook it off, returning his focus to the conversation.

"We need to get to our lessons now," Upper Canada said, grabbing Michigan by the arm and dragging him to the small library where they did their studies. Michigan nodded and followed his brother to the library.

Uncle England was sitting in the library, writing something in his tight, neat handwriting.

"Hello, Uncle England," Michigan said, smiling at his uncle. Uncle England looked up from his writing and nodded in greeting before returning to his work. Upper Canada dragged Michigan to a corner of the library, where their schooling materials were.

Michigan thought all the lessons and stuff were boring, but he knew it was important for him to be well-educated, especially if he wanted to be a good British colony. It wasn't his place to ask to do something else. He was a colony, and it was up to his grandfather and uncle to set the standards that he had to live up to and decide the lessons he needed to learn.

America had corrupted Michigan for a long time, and he needed these lessons to help remove that influence.

"What are we doing today?" Michigan asked.

"French, I believe." Upper Canada said. Michigan nodded before reaching for the French book.

"I know that French is the trade language, but if Uncle England and Grandfather don't like her at all, why do we learn it?" Michigan asked.

"Because, unlike America, we don't let grudges get in the way of being civilized people." Upper Canada said, his voice taking on that same bitter edge it always took when he talked about America.

"Oh, okay. Sorry, Uppy," Michigan said, opening the book. He felt the same uncomfortableness he always felt when he annoyed his

brother, as well as guilt over how he had learned things from America. It wasn't his fault America was a terrible person, but Michigan couldn't help but feel he should have noticed it sooner.

"It's alright to have questions. Besides, I don't see you as America, and most of the damage has been fixed. You aren't his kid anymore." Upper Canada said

Michigan nodded. Upper Canada was right. Michigan wasn't America's child anymore, and he couldn't be more grateful about it.

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September 23, 1813

It hit Michigan suddenly. It was like a warm blanket had been ripped off him, leaving him cold and exposed to the elements. It was...strange.

"Uncle England?" Michigan asked, walking over to his uncle, "I think something happened. I feel strange."

'What do you mean?' England wrote, his eyes concerned. Michigan shrugged.

"I...I feel like a good feeling just ended...like something bad happened." Michigan said. England huffed out one of those strange breaths Michigan knew was a laugh and held out his hand, asking for the paper back. Michigan returned it, and England scribbled something down before handing it back.

'That was most likely the end of martial law. You're okay. It just means that you're such a good colony now that you don't need any outside help.'

Michigan looked up from the note, a broad smile on his face.

"Really? I don't need help anymore? I'm cured of what America did to me?" Michigan asked. Uncle England nodded, and Michigan threw himself at his uncle and pulled him into a hug. "Thank you! I promise I'll make you and Grandfather proud!"

Uncle England patted Michigan on the back, smiling the best he could at the small colony.

"Imma gonna tell Uppy now!" Michigan said, pausing as Uncle England went to write something on another piece of paper.

'I'm going to tell Upper Canada now. Proper grammar is important.' Uncle England wrote. Michigan nodded.

"I understand, Uncle England. I'm sorry," Michigan said before leaving to find his brother, a wide grin on his face.

Upper Canada was going to be really excited that Michigan no longer needed any help to be a good British colony. They had both been waiting for this day for as long as Michigan had finally shaken off America's influence, and now it was here.

If only the looming threat of America taking Michigan weren't there. If it weren't for that, everything would be perfect, and Michigan would stay with his family forever.

"Upper! Upper Canada! I'm cured! I don't need any more help to be a good colony!" Michigan called as he spotted his brother. Upper Canada grinned, a broad smile stretching across his face.

"Really?" he asked. Michigan nodded.

"Uncle England confirmed it. He says that I'm cured of all of America's influence." Michigan said. Upper Canada laughed.

"You were cured of it much faster than I. That's amazing, Michigan. I'm proud of you." Upper Canada said, pulling Michigan into a hug. Michigan smiled.

"It helped when I have such an amazing big brother helping me see what's right and helping to guide me," Michigan said. Upper Canada squeezed him tighter before pulling away.

"I'm glad I could help you, Michigan. Do you think that Grandfather will come to London to celebrate it?" Upper Canada asked. Michigan shrugged.

"I don't know. I would like him too because I miss him, but he's also busy with the war and stuff, and I don't want to bother him and accidentally cause us to lose," Michigan said, his grin slipping from his face.

"You won't cause him to lose. Besides, Grandfather will be really excited about this, and I'm sure he wouldn't mind. I bet Uncle England has already started writing a letter to him." Upper Canada said.

"You're probably right, I'm...I'm just worried about America. I'm scared that..." Michigan trailed off, not sure how to explain his confusing emotions.

"Don't worry. Even if America takes you, I'll make sure to visit your land or do something so we can keep in contact. I'm not going to abandon you, little brother, not ever." Upper Canada said, his voice so full of conviction that Michigan believed him completely.

"Okay, Upper. Thank you." Michigan said. Upper Canada smiled.

"What are older brothers for?"

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January 14, 1814

When the colony arrived at Grandfather's house, it was the first time Michigan had seen Lower Canada in over a year. Lower Canada had been fighting in the war but came to London to reunite with Upper Canada and talk to Michigan about something.

Apparently, the whole thing had been Grandfather's idea, but no one had yet told Michigan what it was about. Eventually, Lower Canada called Michigan into the parlor, where he was sitting with Uncle England.

"Hello, Uncle England, Lower Canada. Did you need to speak with me?" Michigan asked, walking into the room. Lower Canada nodded.

"My son told me that you once asked him if I would adopt you,"

Lower Canada began. Michigan froze before he flushed red in embarrassment and nodded, "There's no need to be embarrassed, Michigan. It's what I wanted to ask you about."

"If you think it's weird, I apologize. I just wanted to be closer to my brother without having to be related through America." Michigan said, taking care to keep his voice even. Lower Canada smiled, standing up, walking over, and placing a hand on Michigan's head.

"I don't think it's weird. My father gave me permission to adopt any of America's kids who rejoined our family to ensure they could have a normal family structure. That's why I wanted to ask you if you would like to be my son," Lower Canada said. Michigan stared at him, shock plastered across his face.

"Re—really? You would do that?" Michigan asked. Lower Canada laughed, guiding Michigan over to the couch he had just been sitting on before gesturing for Michigan to sit down.

"Of course, I would. Like my father, I understand that the more of America's kids we can save from him, the better. I want you to feel like a proper part of this family, and I don't want your unfortunate former relationship with America to make you feel like you don't belong here. I don't want it to overshadow the way anyone views you. I couldn't save Vermont from America, and he died, but I can protect you. Please, Michigan." Lower Canada said.

For a second, Michigan considered telling Lower Canada that Vermont was still alive but quickly decided not to. Vermont made his choice, and he chose to betray his family and join America in his foolhardy attempt at pretending to be a country when Vermont could have been a part of their true family, could have been an older brother to Upper Canada.

Vermont threw that all away when he betrayed Lower Canada. Michigan didn't want to reveal the extent of Vermont's betrayal, and it would be better if Lower Canada continued to believe Vermont had died.

So Michigan kept his mouth shut and decided to focus on the offer.

Lower Canada wanted to be his dad. Lower Canada wanted to protect Michigan from America and from judgy politicians who believed Michigan was a spy for America instead of a loyal British. Lower Canada was protecting Michigan from all the stigma that came with being the son of a traitor.

"I want to be your son," Michigan said. It was an easy choice. He had heard from his brother about how great a parent Lower Canada was, and since he was without parents, Michigan wanted a father back.

Lower Canada beamed and pulled Michigan into a warm hug, which Michigan eagerly returned. When they pulled apart, Michigan could see that Uncle England was smiling that strange smile of his.

"Thank you, Michigan." Lower Canada said, ruffling Michigan's hair. Michigan smiled and leaned into Lower Canada's side.

"Can I call you Father?" Michigan asked. Lower Canada laughed.

"Of course you can." Lower Canada—Michigan's father said.

"Thank you, Father," Michigan said, the word sounding both so right and so wrong. But Michigan shoved aside anything that said it was wrong and just pressed himself closer to his father's side.

He had a family now. He was safe from America.

For now, Michigan would take advantage of this time with his family and make sure that even if America took him, he had the wonderful memories of his family to keep him sane.

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May 20, 1814

After a few months in London, Michigan returned to Canada with her father and brother, as his grandfather wanted Michigan's father to rejoin the war against America. His father asked Upper Canada and Michigan to return to Canada with him so they could spend more time together as a family, so they traveled back to their

father's land like humans.

It was nice being able to travel with his family and spend more time with them. His father was kind and understanding, and Michigan loved being around him. It filled the ached in his chest that had longed for parental love, and it made Michigan really feel like he had a proper place in his grandfather's home, a place that no one, not even America, could rip him away from.

"Now, I want you boys to behave when I'm gone. Don't cause anyone any trouble, and make sure to show your grandfather the respect he deserves if he stops by," Their father said, a smile on his face. Upper Canada and Michigan both nodded.

"Good. I'm glad you understand," Father said before kneeling and holding out his arms. Michigan tackled him into a hug, and Upper Canada followed behind him shortly. Michigan tightened his grip around his father, not liking the idea of his father returning to war against America. He was scared.

He was scared that America would kill his father before kidnapping Michigan and forcing him to be an American, scared that America would kill Upper Canada, scared of whatever fate lay in store for him if America ever got his hands on Michigan and his family.

But at the same time, Michigan knew that his father had to go to war with America. He knew it was necessary, and he knew that it would give his father a chance to get back at America for all the hurt he did to Upper Canada and Michigan.

Finally, Michigan pulled away from the hug, wiping away tears he hadn't realized started falling. His father noticed them and smiled softly.

"It's okay, Issac," Father said, wiping away the tears before pressing a gentle kiss to Michigan's forehead, "I've fought America before, and he hasn't ever been able to hurt me. I'll be okay."

"Write us letters so we know that," Michigan demanded, crossing his arms, unable to stop the worry and fear that clawed at his chest. His father nodded.

"I will. Don't worry. I can't promise you I'll always be able to give you the information that would ease your mind, but I can let you know I'm alive," Father said, "And Upper Canada, Father wants to see if we can get some sort of revenge for what America did to your capital. I'll be sure to let you know if we can do anything of the sort."

"Really?" Upper Canada asked. Father nodded.

"I promise I will do everything I can to get just for you two, or at the very least make America suffer for the pain he has caused you," Father said before standing up and straightening his back.

"Thank you, Father," Michigan said, wanting to pull his father into another hug. Their father nodded before walking off down the street to meet up with the rest of the army. Upper Canada then smiled to himself before walking inside their father's house.

"Wait, Upper Canada!" Michigan called, following his brother inside, "Are you worried for Father?"

"Of course I am Mitch. But I have faith in him and Grandfather and know they will be okay. So I choose not to worry and instead focus on my faith in them," Upper Canada explained. Michigan nodded.

"That...that makes sense. But...I'm still scared." Michigan said. Upper Canada put his arm around Michigan's shoulder and squeezed him close before letting go.

"I know, but try not to worry. Father knows what he is doing. He'll be alright. You'll see," Upper Canada said with a small smile, "Now, let's finish setting up your room. Come on, Mitch!"

Pushing aside his worries and fears, Michigan followed Upper Canada inside.

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August 20, 1814

"ISSAC! Issac, I got a letter from Father!" Upper Canada yelled,

rushing into their house. Michigan set aside his book and rushed over to his brother, eager to see the letter.

"Pass it over! Let me see!" Michigan said, trying to snatch the letter out of Upper Canada's hand. His brother laughed.

"Calm down, Michigan!" he laughed before passing the letter over to Michigan. Michigan opened the letter and early read every word as he smiled softy at his Father's kind words to them. His father wrote in almost every letter how much he missed Michigan and Upper Canada and wrote about whatever came to his mind that he wanted them to know, much Michigan adored.

Then, when Michigan began reading his father's brief summary of what had happened in America, he nearly dropped the letter in shock.

"Michigan? What happened? Was father injured?" Upper Canada asked, seeing Michigan's face as he snatched the letter out of Michigan's hands. Then Upper Canada gasped as he read the letter.

"Father helped burn down America's capital?" Upper Canada explained, joy in his voice. Michigan smiled.

"He did promise he would get revenge for York for you." Michigan pointed out. Upper Canada nodded.

"Yes, I know, I just didn't expect that. It's amazing," he said, grinning. Michigan nodded.

"Did you see the other thing?" Michigan asked. Upper Canada returned his focus to the letter before gasping again.

"Father stabbed America?"

"Yeah...Father stabbed America. He...he got him back for us." Michigan said, his hand shaking slightly. He felt a swirling mix of emotion, happiness, fear, and deep, deep down, guilt. Michigan quickly pushed that emotion away, knowing it was a lingering trace of America's influence.

"Grandfather must be so happy with Father about this," Upper

Canada commented just as Michigan laughed, realizing something, "What?"

"Father almost kills America two days before the two-year anniversary of when he and Grandfather freed me from America," Michigan said with a smile. Upper Canada laughed.

"Isn't that funny? I guess that's God's way of letting you know where you belong." Upper Canada said, pulling Michigan into a hug and ruffling the smaller boy's hair. Michigan pushed his older brother away and stuck out his tongue before both of them broke down into peels of laughter.

"I'm glad I'm here," Michigan said, shooting another fond look at his brother before taking back their father's letter to put away. He smiled softly as he held it against his chest.

His father was the best.

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October 17, 1814

Michigan knew he would be stolen by America, no matter what the outcome of the war was. Despite all his father and brother had done, despite attacking and burning down America's capital, Michigan's fate had been sealed when America captured his land in September.

It was fortunate that Michigan had been in London at the time, as that was the only reason he wasn't stolen then and there. But his luck would only last for so long. America wouldn't rest until he had taken Michigan from his family, so convinced that Michigan belonged to him that America would not be convinced to let Michigan stay with his family.

Michigan hated it. He hated that his land had been lost, he hated that he had no say in who he got to live with, and he hated that his life and safety were being controlled by humans.

He hated that he was helpless and had no say in anything. Michigan

knew his grandfather felt the same, as every time he saw his grandfather, there was sorrow in his eyes.

Michigan knew that Upper Canada felt the same way, as his brother kept looking for more and more excuses to spend time together. Michigan had once woken up to see his brother sleeping beside Michigan's bed.

Michigan felt terrible. He didn't want to cause his family so much grief, but he knew he had no choice. It wasn't his fault—it was America's fault.

That didn't stop Michigan from feeling guilty.

Michigan just wished that America had never started to fight for Michigan's land. He wished it was like the beginning of the war when America didn't care about him.

Some part of Michigan wondered if America only decided to get Michigan back because he realized that Michigan had realized who his real family was and that Michigan wasn't corrupted by him anymore. It was the only option that made sense to Michigan.

Why else would America fight so hard to steal Michigan from his grandfather if it wasn't because he lost control of Michigan himself?

America gaining control of Michigan was just proof that America was a cruel and terrible man. It was like America waited for Michigan to become comfortable with himself, to find his place in his family, and gain a new brother and a new father, and then swooped in to take it all away.

Michigan wondered if America found joy in doing this to him or if America just wanted to cause him pain and suffering.

Michigan didn't know, and he didn't understand why America had done this.

Michigan used to be in America's head, so Michigan should have been able to figure out what America was thinking, right? Michigan probably had more insight into America than his father or grandfather.

So why didn't any of his actions make sense to Michigan? Why couldn't Michigan figure out why he was being tormented like this?

Michigan just wanted America to give up and give up his claims to Michigan's land. Michigan wished that when his father burnt down America's capital, he had forced America to surrender, or kil—

Michigan wished that his father had just been able to make America surrender.

Then maybe Michigan would have been allowed to stay with his family for the rest of his life.

Why couldn't that have been Michigan's fate?

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December 20, 1814

Michigan made sure to hold still as his Grandfather reclipped his flight feathers, trying to hold back tears. In a few days, his grandfather was going to be forced to give Michigan to America, and Michigan would be forced to leave all of his family behind. His grandfather, his father, his uncle...

And Upper Canada.

Michigan wanted to cry and scream and beg his grandfather to continue the war so he wouldn't have to go back to America, but he knew it was futile. This wasn't Michigan's choice, nor was it his grandfather's.

It was America's fault. Once again, America was ripping apart his family.

"There we go. All clipped. At least when...when I'm forced to let America take you, you can show America that you won't fall for his tricks and show America where your loyalties lie," his grandfather said, patting Michigan on the head.

"What if he gets mad and tries to hurt me for it?" Michigan asked, his voice small. He wouldn't have protested the clipping of his

wings even if America would hurt him. His grandfather knew what was best, and Michigan didn't want to be seen as disloyal, but he wanted to be prepared for every terrible thing America would do.

And more importantly, Michigan wanted to know how to avoid angering America to the point where he would be hurt.

"I don't know. I can only hope that he's weak enough not to hit you, but he's an unpredictable nightmare who has been corrupted by savageness," Grandfather said. Michigan frowned and leaned against his grandfather.

"I wish I didn't have to go back," Michigan said. His grandfather wrapped an arm around him, pulling Michigan close.

"If I had my way, you wouldn't. I'm sorry, grandson. But at least we can still write letters," Grandfather said.

"If America doesn't stop me," Michigan muttered.

"Well, if he does, I'll have a word with him and get him to let you. And if that doesn't work, well, you said some of his other territories might be convinced to rejoin their real family. If you can get allies in them—"

"I can get them to help me write letters to you without America stopping me! That's a really good idea. Thank you, grandfather." Michigan said, smiling, as he felt a small amount of hope flutter in his chest.

"I want to do everything I can to prepare you for America, and I want you to do everything you can to prevent yourself from falling for his tricks and lies again. Can you do that for me?" Grandfather asked. Michigan nodded.

"Yes! I won't fall for any of his lies, grandfather! I swear on my life I will stay loyal to you and the empire until the end of time!" Michigan quickly reassured his grandfather, not wanting him to worry so much.

But still...it was nice that he worried. It was nice to know he cared.

"Good," Grandfather said before patting Michigan on the head. Michigan smiled.

"I just hope no one gets in trouble when I do that," Michigan said, picking up a clipped feather and rolling it between his fingers.

Grandfather laughed, plucking the feather out from Michigan's fingers, "Oh, don't worry about that. Sometimes, you have to get in trouble with bad people in order to learn how to be a good person."

"So...getting in trouble with America is good because it means I'm doing the right thing?" Michigan asked, looking up at his grandfather.

"Smart boy," Grandfather said, ruffling Michigan's hair, "It's proof that you are still a loyal citizen and that while America may control your land, he doesn't control you."

"What if he makes all my people love him? Then I would have to listen to him, even if I didn't want to, right?" Michigan asked. Grandfather laughed.

"A great many of my people are of savage blood, but it's not hard to fight it off. You just push it aside and focus on your real people, and they will guide you. And if even that's not enough, you just have to remember who you are, Issac. If you let yourself be controlled by people who wish to do you harm, then you are a weak man. Regardless of what your people think, you must fight on. That is how you show your loyalty." Grandfather explained. Michigan nodded.

"I understand. I will fight to my dying breath to show them that I know who I am and where my loyalties lie," Michigan swore, straightening his back as he did so. His grandfather smiled sharply, crookedly.

"That's my boy. Come now. It's time for you to get some sleep. You must be prepared for the day you are taken by America. I want you to be a pinnacle of the empire and show to America that although he won a temporary victory now, the Empire's strength will overwhelm him eventually, and when that day comes, I will reunite

you with your family, with your brother and father." Grandfather said. Michigan nodded and loyally followed his grandfather to his bed, dreading that day's arrival.

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don't care about your opinion. I care about Michigan," America said, stalking forward until he and Grandfather were nose to nose. Grandfather smirked.

"Of course. You care about him so much that you left him to fend for himself, and when he was surrendered, you did nothing to stop it. Yes, you clearly care about him a lot, don't you?" Grandfather asked. America scowled.

"Let's sign this damn treaty unless you want to continue the war," America said, eyes narrowed as he snatched the pen off the table, quickly signing his name. Michigan's breath caught in his throat, fear flooding his body as his worst nightmare suddenly loomed closer. His grandfather sighed but picked up the pen and sighed his own name.

"Now, I'm sure I don't have to say this, but please don't hurt Michigan. The poor lad's been through enough," Grandfather said, pushing Michigan towards America. With one last look at his grandfather, Michigan swallowed down his fears and walked over to America.

"Ironic, coming from you," America commented, his voice full of venom before he put a hand on Michigan's shoulder, squeezing it as he did so. Michigan froze and prepared for America to hurt him, but the foreign nation did nothing.

Grandfather made eye contact with Michigan and smiled, calming Michigan's nerves. Michigan relaxed some. He was safe. His grandfather was here. His grandfather would protect him and wouldn't let America hurt Michigan, not in his sights, at least. There was only so much he could do once Michigan was taken back to America.

"Let's go home, Michigan," America murmured before guiding Michigan out of the room. Michigan shot one final look at his grandfather before being steered away. Michigan walked silently, not wanting to say anything that would provoke America's rage.

"Are you ready to go home?" America asked, most likely referring to his house in the place where only countries go.

Michigan wanted to say no. He wanted to cry and scream and run back to the safety of his Grandfather, but he just elected to remain quiet and nod. He knew he was supposed to profess his loyalty to his grandfather eventually, but the fear running through his body was choking him, leaving him unable to speak.

So Michigan nodded and followed America to his house, where they reappeared in his bedroom. Michigan almost smiled at the sight of America's cat but managed to keep his face blank.

"Michigan, are you alright?" America asked, releasing his grip on Michigan's shoulder so he could walk forward and look Michigan in the eyes. Michigan nodded silently. America frowned, "If you're scared to talk to America, don't worry. It's James. America's here, but I'm in charge."

Michigan wished it was Rebecca. She understood that America was meant to be part of the British Empire, and she would understand why Michigan was British now. James hated Michigan's grandfather so much that Michigan feared what his reaction would be when Michigan professed his loyalty to his grandfather's empire.

Michigan remained silent, choosing to look anywhere but James, in the hopes that James would back off and let Michigan retreat to the room he was staying in.

"Did he hurt you, Michigan?" James asked again. Michigan still refused to speak, not wanting to answer, "*Michigan*."

"Grandfather didn't hurt me," Michigan said quietly.

"Grandfather?" James asked, horror in his voice before his face twitched. Michigan nodded, shrinking in on himself as he waited for the blows he knew were coming.

"Michigan," James said, his voice softer and different. Michigan knew then that James wasn't the one in charge anymore. While there weren't many clues to tell who was in charge at any given time, America's voice had always been softer compared to James and the others. Michigan froze in fear.

"Michigan, are you okay? Did Britain hurt you to get you to call him that?" America asked. That question made Michigan snap, furious at how America would insinuate that his grandfather had hurt Michigan to get Michigan to see him as family.

"NO! My grandfather taught me where I belong, and he taught me not to fall for your tricks! He never hurt me! Grandfather loved me more than you ever did! Why did you have to take me away from him? I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" Michigan yelled, stomping his foot and flaring out his wings.

America stared at Michigan in shock, but his eyes weren't trained on Michigan but instead on Michigan's wings.

"Michigan...what happened to your wings?" America asked, his voice thinly veiled with horror. Michigan smiled, glad that America saw his sign of loyalty to his grandfather's empire.

"Grandfather clipped them!" The British colony said proudly, crossing his arms, "To help me show my loyalty to his empire. To show that I will never be an American but a loyal citizen of the crown."

America looked horrified, tears appearing in the corners of his eyes. Michigan smiled, glad that America could see that Michigan was no longer his puppet.

"Oh, son, what did he do to you?" America asked.

"I'm not your son!" Michigan yelled, "I'm not American! He didn't do anything to me! Just leave me alone, you traitor!"

Afraid of America's reaction, Michigan quickly rushed out of the room, not knowing where he was going but just knowing that he needed to get out of there before America beat him.

Michigan ran through the house, hoping he didn't run into any states, but his hopes were dashed when he turned a corner and ran into a state, sending them both to the ground.

"Oh, jeez. You must be Michigan. What are you rushing around for?" Michigan heard Vermont say.

Vermont. The only family Michigan could talk to. His brother, well, his brother, provided that Vermont hadn't been so manipulated by America that he forgot who his other father was.

"I...I..." Michigan began, unsure of what to say that would prevent him from getting hurt. Vermont smiled.

"Do you want me to take you to your room or mine?" Vermont asked, something akin to understanding in his eyes.

"Your room." Michigan quickly said. America was probably waiting for Michigan in the room that would become Michigan's; that way, he could beat Michigan for his comments. Vermont was safer, and it would give Michigan a chance to figure out where his loyalties lay.

"Okay," Vermont said, holding out a hand for Michigan to take. Michigan took it and followed Vermont down the hall and into a room.

Vermont's room was big, with a large bed. Books and clothes were thrown all over the floor, and an old flag of the Vermont Republic was hanging over the bed.

"Make yourself comfortable. You can hide in here as long as you need to. I'll make sure Papa—America doesn't find out." Vermont said, smiling gently. The kindness in his eyes sent a pang of longing through Michigan's chest, making the small colony miss Upper Canada even more.

"Do you miss being a country?" Michigan asked before he could stop himself, looking up at the flag of the Vermont Republic.

"Sometimes, but I don't think I would have made it as a nation. My options were to join Papa—America or join Père—Lower Canada. My people made their choice, and I stuck with them," Vermont said.

"Why America? Why didn't you join our father and grandfather?" Michigan asked. Surprise flashed over Vermont's face but faded into a smile as Vermont let out a little laugh.

"I almost did," He explained, "But once Pa—America started winning the war, we decided to stick with him."

"So it's America's fault you didn't stay with Grandfather?" Michigan asked, crossing his arms. Vermont shrugged.

"It was complicated. Maybe he was, maybe he wasn't. But I can't change things now; I can only move forward with what I have," Vermont said before sighing, "I haven't thought about that in a while."

Michigan frowned, "I'm sorry."

"Don't be. Say...how was Père, if you ever got to meet him?" Vermont asked.

"He was nice. He...he is a good dad. He adopted me, so I didn't have to be without a father." Michigan explained. Vermont smiled.

"That's good. I'm glad you had people to care for you. I was afraid you were alone." Vermont said.

"I wasn't. I was with Upper Canada or my father or my grandfather. I even got to go to London to visit Uncle England?" Michigan said.

"Really? I've never been to London before. How was it? Has England reclaimed his voice?" Vermont asked. Michigan shook his head.

"No, he still can't speak. But London was amazing. It's such a beautiful city. I'm glad I got the chance to go before I was forced to come back here." Michigan said.

"I'm glad you did as well. I've never been to London before, but it sounds like it was an exciting place to visit," Vermont said.

"It was!" Michigan chirped before the stress of the day's events hit him, and he yawned.

"Tired?" Vermont asked, amusement in his voice, reminding Michigan very strongly of Upper Canada once again. Michigan yawned again and nodded.

"A little bit. But it's okay! I don't need to sleep," Michigan said. He didn't want to sleep when sleep meant that he would be unable to protect himself if America came to beat him, especially since

Michigan would have to go to the room they assigned him.

Sleeping wasn't safe.

"Oh, mon petit frère, why don't you get some rest? You look like you could use it." Vermont said, gesturing towards his bed. Michigan frowned.

"You'll let me sleep in your bed?"

"I told you I would protect you from America, non? This is an America-free space. He will not come here, and you can sleep in peace. I will protect you, mon loulou, ne t'inquiète pas." Vermont said. Michigan smiled and pulled Vermont into a tearful hug.

"Thank you," He whispered, voice breaking, before walking over and laying down on the bed, falling asleep almost as soon as his head hit the pillow.

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Michigan was getting used to life with the Americans. Vermont had kept his promise, and Michigan had never seen America enter the room. In the first couple of days, Vermont would bring anything Michigan needed into his room so Michigan wouldn't have to risk running into America.

Vermont was kind, and Michigan was secretly glad that Vermont never joined his family. Because of Vermont's past actions, Michigan had an ally among the Americans. Maybe it was selfish, but it brought him comfort.

But Michigan couldn't hide in Vermont's room forever. He wasn't allowed to hide like a coward. What would his family think of him then? He was a colony of the strongest empire in the world. Sure, he was stuck with America right now, but eventually, he and America would be returned to their proper place, and everything would be right again.

"There's nothing wrong with staying in," Vermont said when Michigan proposed his plan, "Are you sure you will be comfortable with doing this?"

"I have to be. I'm a British colony. I can't show that I'm afraid of a bunch of Americans," Michigan answered. Vermont laughed.

"I'm an American, and you don't seem very scared of me," he said. Michigan smiled shyly.

"Well, you're also Canada's kid. And you've kept America away, so I...trust you." Michigan explained.

"Well, I'm glad you trust me. Now, when you leave, do you want me to stick by you for support, or do you want to do it on your own?" Vermont asked.

"I'll be fine, Vermont," Michigan said, waving off Vermont concerns as Michigan left the room, ignoring the fear that flooded him as he left the room. Resisting the urge to pull his wings around himself, Michigan walked down the hall, trying his best to appear unafraid, as he spotted one of the states.

"Hello, Michigan. Would you like to help me make dinner?" The state–New York said. Michigan bit his lip and shook his head. New York nodded and left. Michigan blinked in confusion. That was it? He wasn't...

Michigan shook the thoughts of New York out of his mind and continued his way around the house aimlessly.

"I was starting to wonder if Dad ever got you back," Ohio's familiar voice called from behind Michigan. Michigan turned to face him, straightening his back.

"He didn't get me back. He stole me from my real family!" Michigan said, finding some confidence in speaking to the state. It was easier than facing America.

Then again, his grandfather only had horror stories of America. He didn't know the states, but...Michigan shook the rest of the treasonous thought out of his mind. There was no use putting that in his head while stuck in enemy territory.

There was something so unspeakably sad in Ohio's eyes that it made Michigan pause before the older state sighed.

"Believe what you wanna believe. But..." Ohio shook his head as he trailed off, "We missed you, Michigan. I don't know why you're so afraid of us now, and...we missed you. I missed you."

"It's not...I'm not scared. I just don't want to be with a bunch of stupid states who aren't even a part of the same country as me!" Michigan insisted, crossing his arms.

"You little–" Ohio began, prompting Michigan to flinch back, preparing himself for Ohio's rage. He knew Ohio wasn't America, but still, Ohio might hit Michigan like America would. Ohio froze, and Michigan swallowed nervously.

"Michigan...I'm not...you're safe here. No one will hurt you. If they do, I'll beat 'em up." Ohio said. Michigan blinked in confusion before snorting.

"Sure, like you'd betray your family for a Brit," he huffed, although still tense.

"Even if you do say you're British. You're still my family. Maybe that's changed for you, but not for me or anyone else," Ohio said. Michigan relaxed a little, although still weary of the state.

"Really?" he asked.

"Mont's been nice to you ever since you came? What did you think that meant?" Ohio asked.

"Vermont's Canadian. Of course he's nice to me," Michigan explained.

"Vermont is an American state," Ohio deadpanned.

"With a Canadian father. And he nearly joined the empire. It's clear he can be trusted because his loyalties are not completely devoted to America. I only wish I could write a letter to my father explaining that Vermont is alive, but it's clear America has prevented Vermont from doing so, and I do not want to risk his

punishment." Michigan rambled, more to himself than to Ohio.

"America's not stopping anyone from doing anything. You know that. You were with him for seven years! Why did two years change you this much?" Ohio exclaimed. Michigan clenched his fists.

"I don't...America isn't as great as you think. He's killed countries for no good reason before! He abandoned me to my grandfather and then stole me back after I finally found my family! Do you want me to support him?" Michigan asked.

Ohio frowned, "Is that what you think?"

"It's what I know is true," Michigan answered, holding his head high.

"I...Michigan, there are two sides to every story. I implore you to listen to what Father has to say about what happened," Ohio said. Michigan frowned, feeling anger bubble up at Ohio's words.

"Why would I listen to a *liar* like *him*?" Michigan hissed, wings flaring out against his will. Michigan was quick to fold them back up. Ohio looked vaguely horrified, and Michigan knew it was because the state had seen the sign of Michigan's loyalty to his grandfather. Ohio then sighed.

"I...you're stubborn, Michigan. But don't be blind." Ohio said.

"I'm not," Michigan responded. Ohio just shrugged, and with one last sad look, he walked off. Michigan watched in confusion. What was that about? Did Ohio only talk to him to try and get Michigan to speak with America? Was that what that was? A mission from America to begin the process of corrupting Michigan again?

Michigan didn't know, and that scared him. Maybe it wasn't worth it to leave Vermont's room. Michigan would ask Vermont to come with him next time.

With that in mind, Michigan quietly fled, ignoring the guilt that burned in his throat.

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Michigan missed his family. The Americans had been suspiciously nice, and Michigan, for the most part, had been able to avoid America. He had visited many of the states and had even become comfortable enough to move out of Vermont's room and into his own. But despite everything, Michigan was lonely. He wanted his family back: his father, his brother, and his grandfather.

He wanted to go home!

Michigan had never felt more like a scared child than he did now. Everything was too much—too confusing. Michigan wished his grandfather was here so that he could help Michigan, tell him what to do and what to think, and make Michigan less confused.

Michigan missed being curled up next to his grandfather, listening to his stories as his grandfather ran a hand through his hair. He also missed reading books with his brother and wasting time together. He missed his father, who was so kind and steadfast, always knowing how to make Michigan feel better.

Being away from them hurt, an ache in his chest.

Michigan hated the feeling. He had tried writing letters to talk to them but never received a response, and he was beginning to think that someone was intercepting the letters, making sure they never got to his family.

Michigan knew that if it wasn't America trying to isolate him so he could have more control, it was some other state doing it on America's orders.

Michigan hated it. He hated being trapped here, not being able to contact his family, and not being able to see the other states. It didn't make sense. Michigan was their enemy. Michigan told them to their faces how his grandfather was coming back to get him and how he would teach the Americans their place, and they never looked angry at him; they just looked sad.

It didn't make any sense.

None of it did.

...Michigan wanted to cry.

A few tears began to slide down his face, but Michigan quickly wiped them away when he heard the door to his room open. Tensing up and praying that it was not America, Michigan turned around to see Virginia standing there.

"Hello Virginia," Michigan began, careful to keep his voice neutral, "How are you today?"

"I am fine. How are you?" Virginia asked.

"I am fine as well," Michigan responded. He knew he could not tell Virginia about his conflicts and longing to be home without getting punished for it. He knew he had to pretend to be okay and happy so he would be left alone. Virginia snorted, and Michigan flinched.

"I can see your tears, little brother. I know you aren't okay. Whatever that monster did, he hurt you badly," Virginia began. Michigan felt his hands curl into fists as Virginia called his grandfather a monster.

"Grandfather is not a monster! And I'm...I..." Michigan trailed off, unable to bring himself to say the words.

"I know you're upset, but you wouldn't be hurting like this if you just chose to let go of the lies. I know you probably did it to protect yourself, but it's over, and you're safe, so just cut it out!" Virginia snapped.

"I..." Michigan began, before swallowing nervously, "They aren't lies."

His voice was quiet, and he wanted to explain to Virginia that they weren't lies. They couldn't be lies because his family was lovely, looked after him, and loved him, and that couldn't be a lie. He wasn't pretending to be anything he wasn't. He wasn't hurting because his grandfather hurt him. He was hurting because of America, Virginia, and all the other states. Except for Vermont. Vermont was family and didn't try to tell Michigan he was wrong.

Vermont listened to Michigan when he wanted to be left alone.

Why couldn't he just be left alone?

"They are lies, Michigan. Britain just lies, and you can't possibly believe him!" Virginia said.

"I don't know what to believe, but I...I want to be with people who care about me, who are kind and nice, and my actual family. That's not you. Get out! Get out, get out, get out, leave me alone!" Michigan snapped, wrapping his clipped wings around himself and covering his ears with his hands, trying to bite down sobs.

He couldn't show weakness.

Michigan only left that position when he heard the door shut and saw that Virginia had left. He relaxed a bit, letting the tears fall.

He really wanted to go home. Now more than ever.

Michigan hated it here. He wanted his dad. He wanted to be home, where everything made sense again.

Michigan just wanted his family.

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The day had started normally. In fact, it started better than it usually did, which meant that Michigan should have expected something to go wrong. But he wasn't. He was relaxing, getting far too used to being in America's home.

But he was relaxed and wasn't expecting anything to go wrong.

But out of everything he could have expected, he didn't expect to be approached by a nervous-looking America.

"Hello, Michigan," America said, but his accent, his posture, it all seemed so wrong. Michigan knew he wasn't talking to America anymore, but now he had to figure out who it was. Not James, he was more brash, more...everything.

This had to be one of his trapped siblings.

"Who are you?" Michigan asked. The territory controlling America smiled softly, and Michigan instantly knew who it was, "Illinois?"

"Hey, big brother. I know...I know you aren't on good terms with Dad right now, but I was hoping the body's face wouldn't prevent us from talking," Illinois said. Michigan wanted to talk to his brother, and he wanted to say yes. *God*, he wanted to say yes.

But the chance of it being a trick caused the territory to shove down his instinct and figure out who was present first. America could be using Illinois to get close to Michigan and manipulate him. Michigan knew Illinois probably didn't know. America was brilliant at hiding his intentions, but Michigan had to be safe first.

"Is...is America listening?" Michigan asked, hoping that America was not present like the man usually was when he was not in control over the body. Illinois frowned, and Michigan's heart sank.

That was as good of a yes as any.

"Michigan—" Illinois began, reaching out, but Michigan took a step back, the fear of America ripping the body away from Illinois and hurting Michigan flooding his body.

"I love you, Illinois," Hoping that he could reassure the territory that it was not him he was afraid of, "but I can't...I can't..."

Illinois' face dropped, and although it was not his brother's true face, but America's. Michigan felt a pang of sorrow and grief that was so overwhelming that he felt he might cry. Michigan didn't want this! He wanted to talk to his brother. He wanted his family! Why did America have to ruin it all for him?

"Michigan, it's me, not Dad. I'm not...I'm not going to hurt you," Illinois said, tears welling up in his eyes.

"I know. I trust you, Illinois. But even if...I can't!" Michigan stammered out before fleeing, tears in his eyes before reaching his room and sobbing.

He wanted his brother! Why couldn't he have that? Why did he have to be trapped in America's body?

Why couldn't things be okay?

Michigan felt far too much like a small, scared little child, and he hated it. He was supposed to be better than this, be a representative of his grandfather's empire.

Instead, he hid and cried and couldn't even help the other territories before it was too late, and they were wholly corrupted by America.

Michigan was a useless coward, and he hated it. He hated feeling so scared and useless. He hated crying at the smallest things. He hated being alone. He hated it all!

Why did he have to feel this way? Why couldn't things be simple? Why couldn't Michigan go home? Why did his life have to depend on the actions of others and never on him? Why couldn't he choose what he wanted?

Michigan hated it all. He just wanted things to be normal again.

He didn't want to feel confused! He wanted things to be okay again! He didn't like the doubts or any of the bad feelings. Why couldn't he have just stayed with his grandfather or stayed with America throughout the entirety of the war? At least then, things would make sense.

Manipulated or not, he wouldn't be confused. He wouldn't have the guilt that came with pushing them away. Because even if the Americans were supposed to be evil...Michigan couldn't forget the seven years he had spent with them now that he was back in his childhood home.

It was easy to do that with Britain, and it was easy to forget how it was here.

But now that he was back, things weren't lining up. And it made Michigan feel guilty.

He just didn't know which side he felt guilty about.

It was all so confusing. He hated it.

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Michigan's flight feathers were almost back. He knew the states had been watching their progress, seeing it as a success, and most likely reporting back to America about it. They would probably interpret it as a sign that they had won, that Michigan would soon be back under their control.

Michigan knew he had to do something about it soon.

So late one night, he snuck into the parlor and grabbed a pair of scissors from a sewing basket before creeping outdoors.

Michigan has never done this before, but he had time to figure it out. He didn't have to do it perfectly, like his grandfather, but enough so to show where his loyalties lay. He stretched out one wing, focusing intently in the dim light, biting his tongue as he figured out where to place the scissors before bracing himself for the first cut.

But before he could do anything, someone grabbed his hand, pulling it away from his wings.

"What are you doing?" Ohio asked.

"I'm taking care of my wings," Michigan said, taking care to make sure he sounded confident. He had to hide the doubts and hope that Ohio would just go away.

"With scissors?"

"You don't know how to take care of wings! Scissors can be very important!" Michigan protested, but his excuses sounded weak, even in his ears. Ohio sighed.

"I help Penny with her wings all the time," Ohio said, snatching away the scissors and throwing them into the brush surrounding America's house before releasing Michigan's hand. Michigan snatched his hand back and crossed his arms, looking down at the ground.

Now, what was he supposed to do?

"Just because the flight feathers are almost back doesn't mean I'm loyal to America now," Michigan eventually said. If he wasn't allowed to clip his wings, he could at least establish his loyalty this way.

"What? That's what you think we're happy about?" Ohio asked, confusion evident in his tone. Michigan scoffed.

"Why wouldn't it be? There's no other reason for you to care so much about my wings." Michigan said.

"Michigan, we care because we were worried about your wings being clipped, and we're glad that they are healing," Ohio explained.

"Yeah, because then I look like an American," Michigan said, filling in the blanks.

"That's not why! Is it so impossible for you to think we care about your wings because we care about you? Is it so impossible to think that your clipped wings were scary because it's a cruel thing to do to you?" Ohio exclaimed, his voice teary. Michigan turned to face him and saw tears sliding down the state's face.

And with that, something inside of Michigan broke.

"Why can't you just be mean and evil and cruel like you're supposed to be!" Michigan cried out before shoving his face into his hands, trying his best to hide the tears.

Why did they have to care so much? Why did they have to be the opposite of everything Grandfather said about them?

"Because that's not who we are. I don't...I don't know what happened to you when you were with Britain, but Michigan, I've always loved you, and I always will. I never stopped caring about you. You're my little brother. I would never be cruel to you," Ohio said softly, and Michigan looked back up at the state, seeing how painfully *kind* his eyes were. Michigan bit down another sob before practically tackling the state into a hug, quietly crying into his shoulder.

Ohio hugged him back, the state's grip strong but also so very gentle.

"Please don't hurt yourself. I don't care if you become British, but *please*, don't hurt yourself to prove a point," Ohio said in Michigan's ear as Michigan realized the state was crying, too. Michigan only began crying harder.

"I won't. I'm sorry!" Michigan said, unsure of what he was apologizing for. The guilt was back with a vengeance, and it only amplified Michigan's sobs and made it harder for him to breathe.

"It's okay," Ohio said, pulling away from the hug and wiping the tears from his face, "I don't...I don't blame you, Michigan. No one does. Not even Dad. But he's...he's worried. We all are. I won't tell him about this, but..."

"You want me to talk to him," Michigan said with a frown.

"Only if you want to. It doesn't have to be long. Just enough for him to know that you're okay, that the clipped wings were the only thing like an injury you had. Maybe you don't see him as your father anymore, but you never stopped being his son."

"Okay." Michigan blurted quickly.

"Okay?" Ohio repeated, confused.

"One quick talk. With you and Vermont there." Michigan said, hoping the two states would prevent him from losing his nerve. Ohio smiled and reached out to ruffle Michigan's hair.

"You got it," Ohio said before looking up at the sky, "While we're out here, would you be interested in learning about the constellations?"

"We don't see stars the same here," Michigan pointed out. Ohio laughed.

"I can describe 'em, and you can find 'em," he said, turning to face Michigan. Michigan hesitated but then nodded.

"Okay," he said quietly. Ohio beamed and looked back up at the sky as he began describing shapes and telling stories. Michigan leaned into Ohio's side as he talked, fighting off sleep as he looked for the shapes his brother was describing.

It was nice.

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Michigan was beginning to regret his rash decision to speak to America. It seemed okay at the time, but...Michigan was scared.

"You'll be okay, Michi. He's worried, not angry." Vermont said calmly as Michigan's tightened his grip on the American's hand.

"I'm not scared." Michigan insisted. It was true this time, too. After talking with Ohio, Michigan realized he wasn't as scared of the Americans as he had convinced himself he was. Michigan did want to speak to America about everything, especially about his grandfather. Still, he was just nervous that America would be upset that Michigan was so quick to betray him.

Vermont just smiled and gave Michigan's hand two quick little squeezes as America and Ohio entered the room.

"Hello, Michigan," America said, a gentle smile on his face. Michigan smiled back.

"Hello. I..." Michigan trailed off.

"I'm sorry if...if I scared you. I know...Britain is a persuasive man, especially when you are under his power. I know that. I should...I needed to have been more understanding. I know your position better than Vermont or Ohio did, and they were kinder to you than I had been. I am eternally sorry for that." America began. Michigan released Vermont's hand and began fiddling with his fingers.

"It's okay. I know...I understand that you were worried." Michigan said, biting his lip, "I still feel really conflicted about things. I don't think...I can't call you Dad right now. I don't...I might never."

It would feel like a betrayal of his father figure in Canada, who did

his best to look after Michigan and ensure everything was okay for Michigan as a British colony. He did love his father and Upper Canada, and even if Michigan reconnected with his family here, even if America was to become his dad again, Michigan couldn't betray that.

America's face fell, but he nodded, "Okay. I won't pretend that I like or want that to be the case, but...I'll try hard to respect that decision."

Michigan nodded, muttering a quiet thank you.

"What do you mean when you said Grandfather was persuasive?" Michigan asked. He knew it to be true, but it just...something in the way America said it made it seem like there was more to that, especially with how he specified that colonies would have it worse.

"I mean...Britain has a...he's good at convincing his colonies to do and believe what he wants...even if that's not what they believed at first. I know...Britain wasn't...he never abused me, but he still...when I was a colony, Britain probably could have convinced me down was up, and knowing that, and hearing what you were saying when we got you back, it reminded me of that, and it worried me." America explained. Michigan looked down, thinking hard about his memories with his grandfather.

That...that didn't seem right to Michigan. It couldn't be right. It had to be some form of exaggeration based on some disagreement America had with Britain.

But at the same time, it also made a little bit of sense.

Michigan pushed it aside. He didn't want to think about that right now.

"Oh." Michigan eventually said, not knowing what else to say.

"Are you okay?" America asked. Michigan shrugged. He didn't know how to answer that. He didn't even know if he had an answer, "Can I hug you, at least?"

Michigan looked up and saw that America had a soft smile on his

face and sadness in his eyes. Michigan nodded, and America pulled him into a quick hug before pulling away.

The sadness in his eyes wasn't gone.

"I'm sorry," Michigan said. America frowned.

"Don't be. It's not your fault," Ohio reassured, crossing his arms.

"He's right. It's not. I'm sorry I couldn't get there before Britain had control over your land." America said. Michigan looked down at his hands.

"It's okay," he muttered.

But he wasn't really sure it was.

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Michigan was much more comfortable being around America now. After their initial conversation, things between Michigan and all the states died down, and things almost felt normal, like they were before the war, except Michigan was in a body of his own. But even with that, things were getting better. Michigan wasn't scared anymore.

He still didn't know what this meant for his relationship with his father and grandfather. Still, Michigan had just taken to ignoring that particular dilemma until he was faced with them again. The main dilemma that plagued him now was America.

It wasn't that the man was cruel or any of the terrible stuff his grandfather had said about America. The problem was that America was...he was kind and a great parent to his states, and...he had been Michigan's first father—his birth father.

Michigan didn't know how he was supposed to feel now if this meant that he was falling back under his d—America's terrible influence. But...even if this influence was terrible, Michigan wasn't British anymore. Maybe he didn't have to live up to the standards of the empire any more.

It was a stupid excuse, but it made Michigan so happy. Some of the winged states had even offered to help show Michigan how to fly, and part of Michigan *longed* for that. They wanted to wait, as Michigan still had one or two clipped feathers, and no one wanted to risk his safety over it.

That didn't stop the longing for the sky.

"Hello, Michigan. What are you up to?" Michigan heard his d–America ask.

"Waiting for the rest of my flight feathers to come back. I really want to fly," Michigan answered. America laughed lightly.

"Good thing Ohio stopped you from clipping them then," America commented. Michigan nodded.

"Do you think Grandfather knew how much keeping me from the sky would hurt?" Michigan asked. He had been wondering about it for a while, but no one knew his grandfather like his dad did.

"I don't know," America said, his voice quiet. Michigan turned to face his da—America, concern on his face, "Britain...he's a complicated man. I don't...we don't agree on who he is as a person. We don't think we'll ever understand him. I don't know if it was meant to hurt you or if hurting you was an accident, and he just wanted to hurt me. I...I don't know. I'm sorry."

"It's okay, Dad," Michigan said, looking away from America.

"Dad?" America questioned, and Michigan suddenly realized what he had just said, flushing red.

"Uh..." Michigan began, unsure what he should say before he just nodded silently. He froze as America threw his arm over his shoulder but quickly relaxed into his dad's side.

"I missed you, Michigan," America said. Michigan nodded.

"I missed you too, Dad," Michigan said, smiling, feeling like a weight had been taken off his shoulder with that admission. He wanted to cry happy tears; he wanted to sob in pain. Everything

was different.

But his dad was still here, despite everything.

And it felt amazing.

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"Remember Michigan. We are shoving you off the roof for a good reason. You will be fine." Pennsylvania said with a wicked grin. Michigan swallowed nervously and looked down at the ground, where the rest of his siblings and his Dad were standing.

"YOU GOT THIS SON!" America yelled, cupping his hands around his face. Michigan smiled at that and nodded at Pennsylvania.

"I think I'm ready. Can you give me a countdown before you push me off?" Michigan asked. Pennsylvania nodded.

"Sure thing. Zero." Pennsylvania said before shoving Michigan off the roof. Michigan screamed, wings flaring out as he tried to righten himself.

"I wanted a better countdown!" he yelled as he caught himself, flapping rapidly, fearing that he was about to drop out of the sky. Pennsylvania laughed, and Michigan watched as she fearlessly jumped off the roof, catching herself with ease before flying up to Michigan and laughing.

"It's the best way to learn. It keeps you from chickening out. Besides, there were mattresses there to catch you," Pennsylvania said before holding out a hand, "Now, come on. Let's fly for real!"

Michigan grabbed her hand, and Pennslyvania smiled before letting go and gaining altitude, flying higher and higher. Michigan looked back down at his family, who were all cheering him on. He then looked up, seeing his older sister framed by the sun.

Michigan smiled before he began beating his wings harder, slowly catching up to her, laughter bubbling up the higher the small territory got.

For the first time in a long time, Michigan felt free.

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March 15, 2020s

Despite what many of his siblings thought, Michigan loved having Illinois room right beside him. It meant that he always had someone close to him and that he always had someone to talk to.

"Hey Noi, you up?" Michigan asked Illinois late one night on one of the rare days they were both at their father's home.

"Yeah, I am. What's up Michi?" Illinois asked. Michigan entered Illinois' room and sighed.

"Can we talk?" he asked. Illinois sat up from his bed, shooting Michigan a confused look.

"Sure. What's up?" Illinois asked, cracking a small grin, "'Cause that's something I expect to hear from Dad."

Illinois' smile faded when Michigan didn't respond. Illinois then pat the space next to him on the bed, and Michigan sat down next to his younger brother, who threw a wing over Michigan's shoulders.

"What's up?" Illinois asked again, small traces of guilt on his face, showing that he probably thought Michigan was going to ask about the mob again.

"I've been thinking." Michigan began with a heavy exhale.

"Dangerous for you," Illinois interrupted.

"*Noi.*"

"Sorry. Continue."

"I've been thinking. After everything that's happened these past few years, with the rest of the world finally getting a hint, between you and the mob and that *fucking bitch*," Michigan spat, "I've been thinking a lot about Britain and what happened back in 1812."

An uneasy silence fell across the room before Illinois sighed, slapping his hands onto his thighs.

"Whelp," he said, standing up, "I'll get the booze."

"Noi, this isn't a conversation that needs booze!" Michigan said, pinching his nose between his fingers.

"I dunno, Michi-Man. Booze helps me talk about my horrific childhood trauma," Illinois said before leaving with a small salute. Michigan sighed and fell back on his brother's bed, listening to the comforting babble of the turtle enclosure. Michigan's eyes fluttered shut, and he began drifting off.

Michigan didn't know how long he spent hovering between sleep and wakefulness, but he was awoken by Illinois' return.

"Alright, I got the crappy beer 'cause, no offense, I'm not breaking out the good stuff. That's for my broken heart issues." Illinois rambled. Michigan sat up, rubbing at his eyes and yawning.

"I still don't think I'll need a drink for this," he said. Illinois shrugged and opened one of the beer cans, making a toast in Michigan's direction, "So, Britain and 1812. Am I finally getting the story?"

"You're getting emotions. Not sure how much of a story that is," Michigan mumbled, pulling his legs up to his chest and placing his chin on his knees, "It was really cool at first, getting a body. You know how it is."

Illinois nodded, "You knew what it was like, of course, we both had controlled Dad's body at one point or another, but this was different, It was yours."

"Yeah. I didn't know about the surrender then, same as you guys. I guess I...I don't really remember what I thought of getting a body. I just remembered loving it. And then it all went downhill so fast." Michigan had tears running down his face as memories he had long tried to suppress came flooding back.

Michigan had never been more grateful for his aphantasia. At least

he didn't have to remember all the details. Still, some of it was seared deeply into his mind, and Michigan knew it would never leave.

"Britain hurt me, and then he was nice...but...I dunno, martial law makes everything weird. I don't know if I would have ended up...liking him as much if he hadn't put me under martial law...but I was doubting Dad before..." Michigan began, trailing off as he struggled to find words to explain how confusing everything involving Britain was.

"You don't know how much of that was you and how much was him," Illinois questioned. Michigan nodded. Illinois exhaled, "Yeah...that sounds awful."

"It is. I...I don't know how I should feel about him. I don't...I don't think he's family, but...I don't know," Michigan said.

"You don't have to know. You can be confused about things. God knows we've all had our fair share of complicated relationships that have been impossible to define," Illinois murmured. Michigan sighed.

"I know. I just want to have a definition of whatever our relationship is so I can stop thinking about it. I don't...I don't like...I never got a resolution to everything, I think. It was all so fast, and then when it was over, we all just tried to put it behind us and never looked back. But that I am...it hurts," he explained. Illinois hummed

"Sounds like the only way to get you to stop thinking about what happened would be to talk it out. Do you think you want to talk to Dad about it?" Illinois asked. Michigan cringed.

"No way. It's so... embarrassing remembering what I believed and what I said to him. He got me thinking I was Canada's son, for Christ's sake! I don't...I don't want to bring it up to Dad's face. It's just...weird."

"Yeah...you ever think about therapy?"

"Not a chance, Noi," Michigan said immediately, "I don't need to see a therapist. I'm fine."

Illinois snorted, "Sure you are."

A comfortable silence fell across the room as Michigan leaned against his little brother, closing his eyes and just enjoying his presence.

"I don't know what I can do to help, Michigan. I'm sorry." Illinois said eventually. Michigan sighed.

"It's okay, Noi. I guess this is just something I'll have to figure out myself."

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March 25, 2020s

Michigan didn't know why he let Illinois talk him into things. He loved his brother and all, but going to Britain's house, even if it was to speak to Scotland, was a bad idea.

"Why do you need to speak to Scotland again?" Michigan asked. Illinois shot him a crooked smile, the same one that meant his brother was planning something, and Michigan bit down a sigh, preparing himself for Illinois' shenanigans.

"I have something important to talk to him about!" Illinois answered.

"And that involves me how?"

"Maybe I just want to spend time with you, huh?"

"Doubt it. You're not being annoying enough to want to spend time with me." Michigan shot back, earning him a smack from Illinois' wings. Laughing, Michigan quickened his pace, leaving Illinois to walk behind him.

"I've been betrayed. I can't believe it." Illinois deadpanned as they arrived at Britain's house. Illinois crouched down and picked the

lock before kicking the door open.

"You have no respect for people's property," Michigan commented. Illinois laughed.

"Mitch, it's Britain's place. I ain't respecting shit here." Illinois said, walking inside. Michigan shrugged but followed his idiot little brother inside. The two wandered around as Michigan ignored Illinois' pocking small trinkets from the house.

"Where's Scotland?" Michigan muttered, turning to face Illinois, who shrugged.

"I got directions to his house, not his bedroom," Illinois said before being cut off by a figure exiting a room from down the hall. A very familiar figure.

Britain.

When the empire noticed them, his eyes narrowed, his face becoming angry.

"Who are you?" Britain asked, his voice dangerous.

"I'm Illinois, that's Michigan," Illinois said, ignoring Michigan trying to elbow him into shutting up. Britain turned to face Michigan, interest in his eyes before a smile grew on his face.

"Hello, Grandson. I do hope—" Britain didn't finish his sentence as Michigan lashed out, socking him across the face with a loud crack before blinking, realizing what he had just done.

He punched Britain.

He broke his nose, too, by the sound of it.

"Go Michi!" Illinois cheered from beside him, grabbing Michigan's arm and shaking him. Britain was clutching his nose, blood pouring down his face. Britain's eyes narrowed at Michigan, and Michigan bit down the instinctive fear from long-buried memories that flowed through him.

"I'm not your fucking grandson." Michigan spat at him, and it was like a small weight came off his shoulders.

"Yeah, we aren't! Call us that again, dupek, and I'll find another thing to break!" Illinois shouted from next to Michigan, flipping him off before grabbing Michigan by the arm and booking it, laughing.

"You weren't here to see Scotland, were you?" Michigan asked. Illinois shook his head, eyes bright with amusement.

"You needed it," Illinois answered.

Illinois was right. Punching Britain felt good as if he was righting a wrong about who he was as a child.

"Thanks, Noi."

Parental Rage

This oneshot is an alternative POV of the Treaty of Ghent from the previous oneshot, so read that for context first.

James could feel America's worry as they walked to the room where the treaty would be signed and where America would finally be able to reunite with his son.

"America, I know you're worried. I am, too, but we have to remain calm. If Britain finds out how to get under our skin again..." James muttered, trailing off.

"How can I not worry after everything?" America murmured. It was rare that America was present when he wasn't in control of the body, as America tended to just not be there when he wasn't in control. It seemed he was making an effort to be present without having to be in control.

"I know, I know. I don't like him either, but we can't let him get an advantage." James said, thinking back to the decades of traumatic memories he was kept away from everyone else, memories of abuse and manipulation. If Michigan even went through a fraction of what they did, there was little that would stop James from tearing Britain apart.

"You can't let the war restart. We are just getting my brother back, and I can't lose him again!" Illinois protested, his voice painfully young. James sighed.

"Don't worry, Noi Boy. I won't ruin our chances of getting Michigan back," James said before entering the room, wincing at the pain in his arm, the still-fresh burns being stretched by the action.

Michigan was standing next to Britain, pressed into his side, traces of fear on his face. But he quickly pulled away as they entered, back straightening.

"If that bastard hurt my son, I'll—" America began before he was cut off.

"Do nothing unless you want to restart the war," Indiana said lightly, fear in her voice.

James took a moment to drink in the sight of his nephew. Michigan was taller and older, no longer looking seven or eight but instead thirteen or fourteen. His wings, covered in fluffy down feathers the last time James saw him, now had all the feathers fully grown in.

It was a welcome sight but also a sight that made James far too aware of the time that had passed.

"Britain," James said, his voice cold.

"United Colo—I mean States of America. How is independence working for you?" Britain asked.

"James, let me take control. I need to have words with Britain," America said, his voice filled with an anger James had never heard from him as James tried to keep his facial expression from changing.

"Papa! You can't. We can't risk Michi now. Look how scared he is!" Missouri said, and James felt America back off. But something seemed off about what Missouri said. While he was right, and Michigan looked scared, that fear was directed at them, not Britain.

A sick feeling began in James' stomach as he tried not to throw up at the thought. He had a sinking feeling that it was not Britain Michigan was afraid of. But since he had nothing to prove it and didn't want to send America into another rant, James kept it to himself.

"It could be better if you respected it for once," James said. Britain laughed.

"I am giving you all the respect you deserve. How are your burns? And that delightful little bayonet wound that my dearest Lower Canada gave you? I know they were terrible injuries, and I wonder why you aren't resting. Do you perhaps have something to prove?" Britain asked. This time, James' expression broke as his anger, and

that of almost every other person present flooded through his body.

"We wouldn't let injuries keep us away from finally getting Michigan back," Mississippi spat.

"And we have nothing to prove to you! Why can't you just get out of my life forever!" America yelled, voice teary, the exact reason why James was in charge and not America, despite the fact that America usually handled the political situations.

"I'm here for Michigan. I'm not here to prove anything to you. I don't care about your opinion. I care about Michigan," James said, summing up Mississippi and America's points as he stalked forward until he and Britain were nose to nose. Britain smirked.

"Of course. You care about him so much that you left him to fend for himself, and when he was surrendered, you did nothing to stop it. Yes, you clearly care about him a lot, don't you?" Britain asked. James scowled as cries of outrage echoed in his skull.

"I didn't know, you damn bastard. If I had my way, Michigan would have spent the war safe in my head," America said.

"Let's sign this damn treaty unless you want to continue the war," James said, eyes narrowed as he snatched the pen off the table, quickly signing America's name.

Britain sighed but picked up the pen and sighed his own name.

"Now, I'm sure I don't have to say this, but please don't hurt Michigan. The poor lad's been through enough," Britain said, pushing Michigan towards James.

"HOW DARE HE?" America yelled so loudly that James almost couldn't suppress his wince, *"I'm not like him! I would never lay a finger on any of my babies."*

Michigan shot one more look at Britain, fear still present in his eyes as he walked over to James.

"Ironic, coming from you," James commented, his voice full of venom before he put a hand on Michigan's shoulder, squeezing it as

he did so, trying to provide some comfort.

Instead, Michigan froze, and the sick feeling in James' stomach only grew.

Britain had hurt Michigan. There was no doubt about it.

Michigan then relaxed some, probably realizing that James wouldn't hurt him. Still, James needed to get Michigan out of there and, after two long years of stress and pain, bring the young boy home.

"Let's go home, Michigan," James murmured before guiding Michigan out of the room. Michigan shot a look at Britain as they left but didn't say anything. In fact, Michigan walked silently, something eerily different from how he had been before. Michigan always used to be so loud and curious, not silent and scared.

"Something bad happened to him, Uncle James, didn't it?" Illinois asked tearfully. James didn't answer, as he was more focused on getting Michigan home safely.

"Are you ready to go home?" James asked. Michigan nodded, and in an instant, the two of them were in America's room, where America's cat lay on the bed.

Michigan remained quiet, and his face remained blank. It was scary.

"Michigan, are you alright?" James asked, releasing his grip on Michigan's shoulder so he could walk forward and look Michigan in the eyes. Michigan nodded silently. James frowned, "If you're scared to talk to America, don't worry. It's James. America's here, but I'm in charge."

America laughed, *"Why would he be afraid of me, James? I'm his father. I raised him."*

Michigan looked away and remained silent, and James knew his worst fears had to be true.

"Did he hurt you, Michigan?" James asked again. Michigan still remained silent, "*Michigan*."

James's fear leaked into his voice, and he could tell the others were equally afraid of the answer to the question. None of them wanted it to be true, but...

"Grandfather didn't hurt me," Michigan said quietly.

It seemed like everyone froze at that as horror ran through James.

"Grandfather?" America exclaimed, his tone strangled.

"Britain's not our grandfather, Michi! What are you talking about? What did he do?" Missouri exclaimed, sounding like he was crying.

"Grandfather?" James asked, horror in his voice before his face twitched as America tried to seize control. James knew that it would only end badly if America tried to talk to Michigan now without figuring out the whole story. Michigan nodded as he shrunk in on himself, looking terrified.

"James, please. I need to talk to my son. Please!" America begged, and James relented, sinking back into the world that existed inside their mind.

"Michigan," America began, his voice soft and gentle. Michigan froze, and America's worry only grew. He wanted to pull his son into a hug and protect him from all the dangers in the world.

"Michigan, are you okay? Did Britain hurt you to get you to call him that?" America asked. Michigan's face suddenly changed to one of pure rage.

"What?" Mississippi gasped as the expression was so unlike Michigan.

"NO! My grandfather taught me where I belong, and he taught me not to fall for your tricks! He never hurt me! Grandfather loved me more than you ever did! Why did you have to take me away from him? I hate you! I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!" Michigan yelled, stomping his foot and flaring out his wings.

Before America could even begin to comprehend the hateful words, the words that sounded so much like his former father, his eyes

were drawn to Michigan's wings, and his jaw dropped in shock and horror.

"What happened to his wings!?" Illinois yelled, horror in his voice.

For you see, Michigan's wings had been clipped, the flight feathers cut in a way that would prevent Michigan from flying. Not forever, just until they grew back, but still, it was a twisted thing to do. America had never felt such rage before.

"Careful," James whispered, *"he's scared."*

Britain took away his son's ability to fly. He stole it from him. Why? For control? To scare Michigan into obeying him?

"Michigan...what happened to your wings?" America asked, his voice thinly veiled with horror. He tried to keep his face calm and the rage he felt for Britain under control.

Michigan smiled, and America's horror grew.

"Grandfather clipped them!" Michigan said proudly, crossing his arms. America wanted to vomit as he began to feel unsteady on his feet, the horror overwhelming him, "To help me show my loyalty to his empire. To show that I will never be an American but a loyal citizen of the crown."

"Lord have mercy, what did Britain do to him?" James said in a horrific whisper.

"Daddy, does that mean Michigan hates us?" Illinois asked, sounding like he was crying.

"Dad, we need to go beat up Britain for this!" Indiana said.

Tears appeared in the corners of America's eyes, and America was on the verge of sobbing. Michigan just smiled, like he didn't understand the horrific consequences of what he was saying.

"Oh, son, what did he do to you?" America asked, hoping to figure out what Britain had done so he could fix it and get his child back.

"I'm not your son!" Michigan yelled, "I'm not American! He didn't do anything to me! Just leave me alone, you traitor!"

And before America could do anything, Michigan rushed out of the room.

"Oh, he did hurt the poor boy," James murmured, and America knew the man was probably doing his best to comfort the children.

"I can't—well, I can believe Britain would do this. But it's only been two years. To hurt him this badly..." America didn't even want to think of what Britain had done to turn...turn his son into that.

"Martial law?" James suggested.

"I—he wouldn't," America said.

"He did it to you. Why wouldn't he do it to Michigan? Especially if Michigan fought," James pointed out.

"If Michigan fought and Father put him under martial law, it was to protect him," Rebecca said, joining the conversation.

"By taking away his free will?" Missouri protested.

"At least with martial law, Father wouldn't have to hurt him to teach him how the world works and Michigan's place in it. Michigan knows his place now! This is good! When Father takes us back—" Rebecca began before Indiana cut her off.

"He won't. We're independent." Indiana said firmly.

"And we're going to stay that way. We're never going back to that man." America said.

"Just call him your father, Colonies. You know you want to." Rebecca murmured, the cadence of her voice reminding America so much of Britain.

"Shut up, Rebecca. I don't. Britain's not going to...he's not as all-powerful as you think, Becca. You have to see that eventually." America said.

"Maybe not all-powerful, but definitely did something to get into Michigan's head," America heard Vermont say as the country-turned-state approached them.

"What do you mean?" America asked.

"Michigan ran into me. He...he thinks you're gonna hurt him, Papa. And he...and he thinks of Père–Lower Canada is his only father. Apparently, he was adopted by Lower Canada," Vermont said, sadness in his voice. America froze the words cutting through him. Michigan...Michigan...

Tears pricked at America's eyes, and it only took a few seconds before he was crying as America did his best to wipe away the tears and compose himself.

"Johnathan, you can cry," James said, using America's human name, just like he always did when he was trying to comfort America.

"I need to go speak to him," America began, marching forward before Vermont stopped him.

"You can't!" He said.

"Like hell, I can't! My son's been hurt, and you want me to do nothing!?" America asked, his voice incredulous. Was Vermont perhaps still hiding some hidden love for Lower Canada and Britain?

"He's thinking about Michigan, I think," Mississippi said.

"He's scared of *you*, Papa! Do you really think that barging in there and demanding for him to be the person you lost will help? You'll only further drive in whatever that *bastard* said to make him so afraid!" Vermont snapped.

"Don't you take that tone with me," America said, an edge to his voice.

"Then don't act like I'm wrong," Vermont said sharply, crossing his arms, refusing to let America pass.

"He's right. We need to be careful. You can't let emotions blind you to—" James began.

"How can I not be emotional? That's my son! I know firsthand what Britain is like—"

"And that's why you know you have to take it slow. You came around. Michigan will do. You just have to let him come in his own time. Michigan will see Britain was wrong, and he'll return to normal." Vermont said, sighing, "I don't wanna wait either, but unless we want to make Michigan willingly walk back into that hellhole..."

"We have to be patient," America sighed, "But I...we can't...we want to make sure he's okay, we want to see him. We're all worried."

"He'll come to you when he's ready. I can keep you updated, but right now, he thinks my room is the only place where you won't hurt him. Papa he needs time to understand. The best way to help is by...just being everything Britain said you weren't. I'll try to convince Michigan to come out and see you interacting with our siblings and remind him of your kindness. But I can't make it like you again." Vermont said.

"I know you can't. I just...I wish that I had been there. This is my fault." America murmured.

"Daddy, you weren't there. You didn't even realize something was up until Michigan was gone. You didn't want this," Indiana said.

"But I should of—"

"Thinking about what could have happened won't help. We need a plan for now, not a plan for two years ago," Vermont said, cutting off America's train of thought.

"Yeah...I...yeah. When did you get so wise?" America asked, smiling at his son. Vermont smiled back.

"I've always been wise," he said teasingly. "Now come on. Let's help my little brother learn to love his family again."

Texas gets a Concussion (and he totally deserved it)

Happy very early birthday, ApeculiarChild2. I finished this super early and didn't want to wait to post it, so you get it now ;). Enjoy!

Texas was pissed. That wasn't unusual for him, as the state had a short temper that was always set off by the smallest of things. However, this time it was not the antics of his siblings that had him pissed, no.

It was the actions of his father's adoptive sister, the savage known as Hawai'i.

His father had taken Hawai'i in so he could protect her and bring their family closer together. He also admitted that part of the reason was that he hated seeing Hawai'i, whom he claimed was as civilized as any white nation, be held back by a population of savages.

Texas wondered now if his father's claims of Hawai'i being civilized were even true or if he was just blinded by the love he had for her.

Because no civilized nation would do what she had done.

No civilized nation burns another nation that badly simply for not wanting to be her friend. It was clear to Texas that Hawai'i was just as much a savage as the rest of her people. And he would not let her get away with hurting his brother like that.

No one got away with hurting Texas' family.

"What did I say? What did I say!?" Texas yelled as he marched towards Hawai'i's room, anger flooding his body. How dare she do this! How dare she hurt Alaska's brother after everything his father did for her!

Texas threw the door open and saw Hawai‘i there.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" He spat.

"There's a door, and I had hoped you would have the basic civility of knocking. Now piss off. Your father wants me to have nothing to do with you or your siblings." Hawai‘i said, wrapping her wings around herself. "He doesn't care if I'm sorry."

Texas felt anger run through him. How dare this savage act like she's sorry? She hurt his brother after being so hateful towards his father and everyone else in the family and expects Texas to think that she's *sorry*.

"I don't think you are. You hurt Lasky for what? Because you're savage? Because it feeds some twisted part of you?" Texas asked, hoping to get a straight answer out of her, a reason as to why she would hurt his family.

"I am not a savage, and you just should fuck off, kid!" Hawai‘i yelled. Kid? Texas wasn't a child! And like hell was he going to fuck off after what Hawai‘i had done to his brother.

"You prove that you are!" Texas responded. How dare the savage try to claim she wasn't when she attacked his brother for no reason, showing herself to be a terrible person who does not care for those who try to help her. She attacked Alaska and then called him a friend.

Only a savage could be so delusional.

"Leave me the hell alone. It was an accident!" Hawai‘i said, pushing Texas hard. "Fuck off before I do something I regret!"

Texas gritted his teeth and straightened his back as he prepared to fight the savage before questioning, "Like burning Alaska?"

"I said that was an accident! Is your brain too small to understand that?" Hawai‘i said. Texas then quickly punched her in the face for that comment. How dare the savage imply that he had a small brain when he was white! Hawai‘i then laughed, and Texas felt his anger grow.

"Waiting a long time for that one, have you?"

"Honestly, yes," he replied, getting into a boxing stance.

"Think you can do better than that?" Hawai‘i then spat out blood before looking back up at Texas before smiling and holding up her hands. "Try again. This time, don't hit like a little girl. Unless that was your best shot, kid ."

Rage flooding through him, Texas tackled her, knocking her head into a wall. Hawai‘i kicked Texas off of her and slowly forced him to the ground.

Christ Almighty, why was this savage so *strong*? She was a woman, a savage, and a good foot shorter than Texas. He should be beating her easily!

But the worst part was her grip. It was hot, like touching a hot surface or holding your hand over a fire. Not enough to burn, but enough to redden the skin and make oneself incredibly uncomfortable.

Hawai‘i then pushed Texas' arms behind his back, only letting go when one of them dislocated with a loud pop. Texas screamed in pain. The pain blinded him for a moment as Texas bit his tongue, forcing down tears.

"The fight is over, Kid. Stay down." Hawai‘i said.

"Not until I say it's over," Texas said, lunging at the violent savage. But Hawai‘i moved out of the way before jumping onto his back, her fingers tangling in his hair as she yanked his head back.

"Why can't you stay down?" Hawai‘i screamed before slamming Texas's face into the ground, causing an explosion of pain in his head as he lay there, dazed. Hawai‘i then got off him, and Texas heard her arguing with someone else, although the pain in his head made it hard to identify them.

Texas' head was fuzzy, and his vision was blurry. He groaned in pain as he finally was able to string enough of his foggy thoughts together, recognizing the other voice to be his father's.

"Texas?" Father asked, but his voice echoed, coming out of Hawai‘i's mouth as well as his own.

"Head hurts." Texas forced out as his father sat beside him. His father ran a hand through Texas' hair before helping the state up as Texas tried his best to stand through the dizziness.

"It's okay, Texas. We'll get you to Minnesota, and then I'll take care of Hawaii." Father said, his voice still holding the same strange echo. Texas nodded, leaning against his father for balance, throwing his good arm over his father's shoulders as they left the savage's room.

"Why did you try and fight her?" Father asked, his voice lacking the echo now that they had left Hawai‘i behind.

"She hurt Laska," Texas mumbled.

"And here I thought you didn't like Alaska," Father said teasingly. Texas grunted.

"Still family. And no one hurts my family and gets away with it."

Father pressed a brief kiss to Texas' aching head.

"Thank you, Texas." he said, "It's good to know that all my children have someone as brave as you looking after them."

"Still lost," Texas muttered. He lost to a tiny female savage. It was embarrassing.

"You tried. And I'm sure Alaska will appreciate it either way. But next time, please don't throw yourself into a fight without understanding who you're fighting. Hawaii may be a savage, but she's a strong one."

"Thought you say she ain't savage?"

"She's proven me wrong by doing this. Injuring my children is not an insult I take lightly." Father said, his voice dark. Texas smiled.

"Well least ya see it now," he said, leaning more on his father, who

sighed.

"Yes, I do. And it's very disappointing to see. But that'll change. She's one of us now for a reason. It's our job to civilize her and the rest of her people. Try not to attack her anymore. You only run the risk of turning her further away from civilized life by feeding into those terrible instincts." Father said. Texas nodded, head hurting too much to say anymore.

Fighting the savage had been a way worse idea than he thought.

But at least his father would take care of things from here.

Mistakes in Love

Requested by NewLostIslands. Trigger warning for anti-mormon sentiment.

When Illinois first heard that Michigan had a son, he was both excited and concerned. While a child could be a good thing for a country, it also depends on the context in which a child is born. A child born to represent a new territory or colony was good. A child born of a rebellion or an attempt to set up an illegitimate country was dangerous.

Unfortunately, it seemed Michigan's child was the latter, which scared Illinois. While Illinois knew his father would never let the child grow powerful enough to kill Michigan, it could still hurt Michigan. Maybe it was a small chunk of land, but it comprised two kinds of people Illinois hated: monarchists and Mormons.

Illinois had to make sure his older brother was okay, that he was safe, and that he was equipped to deal with the problem.

"Michigan, can we talk?" Illinois asked his brother one day after he had finally collected enough information on the false countryhuman of Beaver Island.

"Of course we can, Noi. You don't need to ask." Michigan said, shooting Illinois a grin.

"I do if it's about a...delicate topic," Illinois said. Michigan sighed.

"I didn't ask for the child, you know," he said. Illinois scowled slightly.

"Then why haven't you gotten rid of it?" He asked harshly. Illinois knew Michigan cared deeply for family and that Michigan had a history of clinging to false love with unsavory individuals like Upper Canada, but surely Michigan saw the harm Beaver Island would wreck upon him if allowed to live for long.

"A replacement would be born. I can't kill Beaver Island without causing more problems." Michigan said. Illinois scoffed.

"Then get together some militiamen and destroy the false nation before they gain any more power than they have right now. Michigan, I'm worried. You need to get rid of this...this delusion man and his faux nation before they come after you before they hurt you. *Please*." Illinois said, his voice breaking. Michigan's face turned mournful.

"Noi...I...I can't." Michigan said. Illinois laughed in surprise.

"You can't? What do you mean you can't?" At Michigan's silence, Illinois felt horror begin to grow in the pit of his stomach. "Don't tell me you care for it."

"It's not like that, Noi—"

"Then why can't you? They are a rebellion, even if they haven't used force. You are well within your rights to get rid of those noble-loving, Mormon traitors," Illinois spat. Michigan clenched his fist, shaking his head.

"They're still my people!" Michigan protested. Illinois laughed, certain that Michigan was joking. His laughter faded as he noticed the serious expression on Michigan's face.

"You're being serious?" Illinois asked, voice skeptic.

"Of course I am!" Michigan asked, putting a hand over his heart and extending his wings.

"They don't consider themselves your people! They *betrayed* you for an illegal Mormon monarchy. You *want* them to be your people?" Illinois asked confusion in his voice. What was wrong with Michigan? Why didn't he see how foolish calling them his people was?

"They never stopped being my people!" Michigan protested. Illinois shook his head. Michigan was being stupid, being foolish. That didn't make any sense. What was wrong with him? Why was he refusing to see sense? What about that child made Michigan so

defensive of them?

"I don't know why I thought you would be reasonable about this. After all, you still cling to your love for Upper Canada—"

"Don't."

"—even though that colony was nothing more than a—"

"*Don't.*"

"Limey-loving, pathetic, worthless—" Illinois was cut off by Michigan punching him in the jaw and angry fury in his eyes.

"Don't talk about my brother like that," Michigan said, his voice steady and angry, "You never knew him. You don't get to do that."

"Oh, I see—Upper Canada's your brother. And here I thought you stopped being a spineless little limey. I guess I was wrong. Want to go run back to your *grandfather*?" Illinois spat. He knew it was a low blow. He knew it was cruel.

Illinois knew that. But he was so angry that he said it, and he didn't feel any regret. Michigan wanted to hurt him? Fine. Illinois could hurt him right back. Serves him right for rebuking Illinois' concern, for acting like Illinois was the one being unreasonable, like Illinois was in the wrong.

Michigan had taken a step back, the anger on his face fading to pure hurt.

"It's not like that—"

"Oh, we don't have to pretend. You like monarchies? Fine. You like traitors? Fine. I don't...I was just concerned for you. But it's clear you don't want me to be. It's clear you're okay with letting that *rot* grow inside you. Just don't go crawling to me when the rot begins to kill you." Illinois said, turning sharply on his heel and leaving the room, tears building up.

Once he left the room, Illinois fled to the comfort of his own home back in his land before letting the tears fall.

He just wanted to look after his big brother. Why did things go so wrong? Why didn't Michigan see reason?

Why did things have to go the way they did?

Illinois didn't have an answer.

The Fires of Hatred and Passion Are Much the Same

Bold is French

France took another drag of her cigarette, before blowing the smoke into Britain's face, a small smile on her face.

"France, please be serious," Britain said, sighing deeply. France's grin widened a beautiful kind of amusement in her eyes.

"Come now, mon chéri, learn to have a little bit of fun," France said, offering out the cigarette. Britain ignored her outstretched hand, causing France to let out a small huff of annoyance.

"We need to focus," Britain argued, not wanting to be dragged back into one of their back-and-forths that always ended with more longing than they should. He didn't want to be reminded of the terrible longing he had for her, the terrible longing for something more than the insults, barbs, and war.

"Fine, fine, if you insist." France said, taking another drag of the cigarette, **"But you're missing out. Come on, cigarettes are good for stress, and you are always so stressed out."**

"You'd be stressed too if you had to deal with as many brats as I do," Britain commented. France laughed, rolling the cigarette between her fingers, amusement in her eyes. It was a beautiful picture, one that Britain tried to commit to memory.

"Oh, and you call me the whore. Then again, maybe I am one, but at least my children like me. Say, how's your relationship with America again?" Britain clenched his fists, trying hard to keep calm, the air of longing broken by the rage that flooded through him, another reminder that no matter how badly either of them wanted this, it would not come to pass, not unless something made their

countries closer.

"Better." He forced out through gritted teeth, not liking the reminder of how much his control had slipped from one of his most docile sons or that fact that the sinful woman he felt so much longing for knew she could use it against him.

"Just like ours, ma petite île," France said, getting closer until their faces were inches apart. Britain scowled and pushed her away, pushing aside the unwanted thoughts of kissing her and then taking her to bed.

"You can't flirt with me and expect that I'll fall for your feminine charms," Britain said, ignoring the very poignant fact that he already had. But he could at least lie to France and keep some semblance of control. France laughed, something that told Britain that his lie was not working. Strangely, he was less upset by that than he should have been.

"Oh, Britain, I'm not trying to make you fall for me, but I'll be sure to put you down as interested next time I'm bored," France said. Britain flushed, embarrassment flooding through him. He hated it when France caught him off guard like this.

"I'm not interested, whore." he snapped. This was not a time in which he could indulge in his feelings, even if that offer were oh-so tempting. He would have to deny the temptress for now.

"Oh, be creative, why don't you? I've heard much more creative insults come from your mouth. Let's not pretend like this detour isn't the usual." France said. Britain rolled his eyes.

"What, you mean all the talk about how Satan sent you to torment the Earth? Because those aren't insults; they're facts. You sin, and you sin and still have the audacity to call yourself a Christian because you feel no shame about any of your actions." Britain said. Sometimes, it felt as if this France was sent to torment him specifically with the sinful longing he had begun to feel since the turn of the century.

"We're both sinners. We both don't feel shame for those sins, so we

might as well be unashamed sinners together," France said, her voice low. It was so painfully attractive, and Britain knew France knew it.

"We're supposed to be enemies, so what exactly do you think we can do together? We would have to wait for time to allow us to do so. You and I both know that secrecy isn't what you're best at." Britain said, taking the cigarette from France's hand and taking a long drag.

"Ma petite île, I can keep a secret if you want me to," France said, taking the cigarette back and pressing a gentle kiss to Britain's lips, a kiss that tasted so much like the cigarette. Almost subconsciously, Britain began to lean into the kiss before France pulled away.

"Just because you want to doesn't mean you can," Britain said, feeling slightly breathless. France smiled.

"That's true enough, mon chéri," she said, her tone light and airy, her voice confident and beautiful, "But I know we both can't wait for that day to come."

France kissed him, this time, less gently, this time more of a promise that maybe someday the mutual attraction that had been building for some time could go somewhere, a promise that they could be something more to each other.

As far as promises go, this one was pretty nice.

The Not So Good Friday

Good Friday earthquake of 1964 requested by dhsakxncb. Sorry this took forever.

Alaska wasn't a big fan of cities. He preferred to live out in the woods, by himself and at peace with the world. However, that didn't mean that he avoided cities entirely. He visited them occasionally, going to Juneau for political stuff his government wanted him to get involved with now that he was a state or just to look around at shops and restaurants.

Today, Alaska was in Anchorage, looking for a restaurant. It was about 5:30, and he was starting to get hungry. He had been in the city to buy some things for his home, like scented candles and yarn —little things that made Alaska's life a little more peaceful and allowed him to make things for his siblings.

Especially NASA. The space organization realized how many stars could be seen from Alaska's home and began to spend more and more time there. Alaska figured it was about time he made his baby brother a blanket, as NASA could not handle the cold.

Suddenly, the ground began shaking under Alaska's feet, faster and faster, until it threw him to the ground, his precious bag of yarn spilling out into the street. Alaska pulled himself into the fetal position, more out of instinct than anything else, wishing he was in country form so he could have his wings to wrap around him.

He just had to wait out the earthquake.

As Alaska lay there, eyes squeezed shut. He felt the world shift around him. He heard glass shattering and buildings falling apart, and all he did was squeeze his eyes tighter, hoping it would end soon.

The earthquake seemed to last forever, a horrific symphony of

shaking earth and shattering buildings, a storm that Alaska was caught in, as small pieces of debris cut at his body. It was hell on earth. Broken sobs made their way past Alaska's lips as he prayed for God to make it stop, prayed that it end soon, and prayed that he would not be killed by the earthquake, an earthquake, unlike anything Alaska had felt before.

It felt as if the Earth itself was ripping apart.

Finally, the shaking of the land seemed to stop, but Alaska stayed where he was, as he could not tell if the land was still shaking or if that was his own trembling body.

He could hear his own breath, painfully loud against that silence that only seemed broken by pained cries and the creaking of buildings. Alaska lay there for another eternity before he finally opened his eyes.

Anchorage was destroyed.

Buildings lay crumbled. Sinkholes had opened in the streets. His biggest city was gone just like that. A shaking of the earth more powerful than Alaska had ever felt before. He felt lightheaded and faint and shakily climbed to his feet, stumbling slightly.

The city looked like so many Alaska had seen destroyed by war. It was hard to believe an act of nature could do that. Alaska closed his eyes as he tried to shake the horrible memories from his mind.

Suddenly, Alaska's eyes flew open as he remembered the little brother who had been at his house. Alaska took another shaky step forward before transporting himself back to his house. It looked undamaged, but NASA was shaking in front of it, shivering and barefoot.

"Go back inside!" Alaska snapped at the organization, knowing how stupid it was for him to be outside in the weather. NASA's head snapped back to face him, fear on his face.

"What was that? Did we get hit by a meteor?" NASA asked, his mind stuck in the stars like it always was. Alaska shook his head, grabbed

his brother by the elbow, and guided him back inside. "Laska, you're hurt!"

"It's not bad. I've seen worse. But you're going to be hurt worse if you stay outside." Alaska said calmly. In all honestly, he had forgotten about the cuts and bruises, so focused on checking in on NASA and processing the destruction. "And that was an earthquake —a really bad one. I've never felt one like that before. I..."

Alaska shook his head, trailing off as they stepped inside.

"Are you okay? Should I get Dad? Dad can fix things, right?" NASA asked, his wings flaring out as he asked rapid-fire questions.

"Papa will find out and come check on us. I want to make sure you have no damage from the cold." Alaska said, wanting to keep his genius little brother close before he inevitably ran off and got himself hurt, "Please, stay with me?"

NASA crossed his arms, analytical eyes scanning Alaska before he nodded.

"Fine. But I get to make sure none of your injuries are bad." NASA said.

"Sure thing, little brother. I could use the help." Alaska said, throwing a blanket over NASA's shoulders before going to grab the first aid kit from his bedroom, stumbling slightly as he did so.

Alaska still felt like he was shaking, like the earth had yet to settle and was still shaking and shaking and shaking and *shaking*—

Alaska was pulled out of his thoughts by a wing on his back, NASA looking at him with concerned eyes. Alaska felt a pang of shame in his chest, having worried his little brother so.

"I'm getting Dad," NASA said, his voice soft. Alaska nodded, throat seizing up as he was guided to his bed, with the blanket he had put on NASA being tucked around him. Alaska burrowed into the warmth, trying to shake the feeling of the earth heaving beneath his feet.

It did nothing to help.

Alaska still felt unstable and shaky.

He still felt like he was trapped in Anchorage as the earth pulled apart the city around him. Not even his father could remove the shakiness that had just been injected into his being.

Everything was shaking.

Nothing could stop that.

The Gardening Accident (Soviet America AU)

This was written for @universal-casey on Tumblr. This is her AU (In which America loses the Cold War and becomes a part of the USSR), but she was gracious enough to let me write something for it. Check her out.

America enjoyed pissing Soviet off. It was one of the few things he could do nowadays as an act of rebellion, to show Soviet that he wasn't going to roll over and accept his rule. Soviet might have branded him, but America wasn't one to back down from a fight.

Many of his states were still fighting, or at least they were the last America had heard, so America resolved to do all he could to piss off Soviet in an attempt to help. It wasn't like he could do much to help from where he was, trapped in Soviet's home listening to the man taunt him, belittle him, and act as if America was beaten.

America wasn't going to be beaten, especially not by that damned commie. He was America, and his country would regain its freedoms someday. America knew it would. He would ensure that his country regained its independence.

However, there wasn't much America could do right now. He had tried to escape a few times—all of them failing. He needed to wait between his escape attempts for Soviet to lower his guard, allowing for a gap in which America could escape.

Until then, America was just doing his best to avoid the other country.

Like now.

America was hiding out in the small guard shed on Soviet's property. It kept him out of that suffocating air of that house but gave him some degree of privacy where he could think, but alone,

pretty for a few faint selfish minutes that he was back at his home, back in his land, independent like he should be.

His fantasy was broken by the door slamming open. America sighed.

Seems like that peace was short-lived.

"What did I say about leaving my home?" Soviet asked, his voice harsh. America rolled his eyes.

"I never left your property." He snarked back, not willing to play nice with his occupier.

"You are still supposed to stay in my house," Soviet said. America turned around, looking the man in the eye.

"I don't have to do anything you tell me," he snapped. Soviet's expression grew darker and angrier, and America felt a swell of satisfaction well up inside him.

"I own you and your land. Yes, you do," Soviet said. America scoffed, crossing his arms.

"You don't own me. I"m my own damn country! You got lucky. That's all it was. Luck. Not skill or power or planning. Luck."

"I don't own you? I just got lucky?" Soviet snarled back, his face red with anger as his fingers slowly began twitching and closing into a fist.

America continued ranting, voice full of anger and visceral hatred, "A brand doesn't mean *shit*! None of this means anything! I'll get out of this, and I'll—"

America looked up at his conqueror just in time to see Soviet grab a rake from the shed. A borderline animalistic snarl escaped him as he swung the rake towards America, too fast for him to react. The second the rake made contact with his eye, America was consumed by blinding pain. It overwhelmed his senses and his mind, turning everything into pure, undiluted pain.

It must have only been a few seconds, but it felt like hours, and the next thing America knew, he was on his knees, body swaying as he looked up at Soviet through blurred and bloodied vision, seeing an eye—*his eye*—hanging off the rake.

America was screaming. When did he start screaming? Everything felt distant; everything was being consumed by pain. America had never felt anything like this before.

America collapsed to the side, the pain overwhelming him as his vision faded away. America lay there, barely conscious. He wasn't screaming anymore but sobbing, pain wracking his body. Blood slid down his face, mixing with his tears, coating his mouth with the sickening taste of iron.

"Remember this day. Remember, you lost. The great United States lost both his eye and his dignity." Soviet hissed as America's consciousness faded, darkness overtaking the pain.

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Awareness returned to America slowly.

First, it was the dull, throbbing, aching pain coming from his eye. Then, the sterile smell of a hospital. Then, it was sounds and sensations.

Then, it was the memories. America lurched upwards, eyes flying open as he reached for his face, freezing as he touched the bandages there. America fought to keep the bile down, shaking slightly as he tried to come to terms with what he was feeling.

His eye was gone.

His eye was gone.

For one fleeting moment, he had convinced himself that it was all just a terrible dream, that he...that he...

America felt sick. This was worse than the brand, worse than the invasion and takeover, worse than all of that.

"It was about time you woke up."

The sound of Soviet's voice jolted America out of his thoughts, fear surging through him as his hand went to cover his injured eye. America turned his head to the side, realizing that Soviet had been standing in his blind spot the entire time.

His blind spot.

Oh god, he had really lost an eye.

America opened his mouth to say something, to spew out his hatred and vitriol, but stopped, his voice catching in his throat as an all-consuming wave of fear crashed into him.

Soviet could have killed him. Soviet has had America at his mercy for god knows how long, and Soviet could have killed him. America's poking and prodding and insults and taunts and jeers had don't nothing to change that.

Soviet could have killed him.

Soviet very nearly did.

America wanted to say something, but the fear stifled him and warned him of the death and pain that was bound to follow anything he said.

Choking on fear and pain, America closed his mouth, feeling his ever-cracking pride break further under the humiliation. His last way of fighting back was gone.

Why couldn't he just speak?

Soviet seemed amused by his silence, and America's hatred for the man burned fiercely in his chest.

"I hope this is an important reminder for you, a reminder that you belong to me now, and I can do with you as I please. You're alive because I want you to be. You live because I let you. Next time you forget it, you'll lose more than an eye." Soviet hissed, his tone

deadly and enraged.

America's mouth was dry, hands shaking. It seemed like every part of his body was working against him, making his fear painfully obvious for the other to see.

He hated it. He hated feeling weak and beaten.

But that was the thing. He was beaten. Soviet could have killed him at any time. Soviet was right in the fact that America was only alive because Soviet wanted him to live. If America continued to fight and resist like he had before, he would be killed.

America couldn't die. He needed to be alive for his people, for his states. Seeing him...seeing him like that would hurt, but America would be alive. Isn't that what mattered most?

"I understand," America muttered, trying to keep his voice quiet, trying to keep the hatred he felt in every inch of his body from seeping into his words.

Soviet smiled, a cruel and demeaning thing, and America looked away, staring down at his shaking hands.

He still felt sick.

Checkmate

The Croatian War of Independence, Croatia's POV, requested by , with the title being given by SinfullTrashHuman

Croatia was happy.

That was a strange thing to say when you were still technically at war, but she was happy. The Sarajevo Agreement had just gone into effect, and a ceasefire was enacted between her and the pro-Serbian forces. It wasn't an end, but it was the beginning of proper peace.

More importantly, it allowed for United Nations' security forces to enter her country and guard the borders between her and the others, allowing for buffer areas that would hopefully keep the ceasefire in place so the war could end.

She was excited to be a country, a proper one, not just a soviet republic of Yugoslavia. But more importantly, she was excited for peace. She couldn't wait until she didn't have to worry about fighting, or massacres, or any of the horrible things that came with war.

It was the chance for a new start.

Croatia would always be connected to her siblings, and she would always still know them as family. But now she had a chance to be herself outside of them, outside of just Yugoslavia, and she was excited for it.

She knew her siblings would think the same.

This was always going to happen.

Croatia couldn't bring herself to feel too upset, not when she was so excited to experience true independence. She had spoken to UN a few times, and he seemed nice, willing to work to understand her

and make sure she felt she had a proper place.

She knew Yugoslavia thought Croatia wasn't ready for independence, too immature and too young like she wasn't older than him. She was only kept looking younger by the fact that she wasn't a proper country yet.

But she was now. This was her purpose, her duty.

Croatia was going to be independent, and she was going to be the best country her people had ever seen.

She was going to make sure they had peace.

She was excited about the future.

Her feelings about her family were more complicated, especially with the array of countryhumans that had spawned in the wake of her bid for independence. But Croatia wasn't going to worry about that. Her family was dysfunctional at best, and things would smooth over in time, so long as she was patient.

But in the meantime, she had more important things to do.

Independent countries didn't need families.

Croatia was going to do fine.

The Dying Bay

TW for slightly suicidal ideation/ thoughts. Not a lot, but I want to give y'all a warning.

Plymouth was tired. He knew his death was coming soon, that he would soon pass on like so many of his siblings before him. Like Wessagusset, like United Colonies of New England, like Popham, like Saybrook, like New Haven.

He was going to die. He and Maine were going to die, and their land was going to belong to Massachusetts Bay.

It terrified him more than he wanted to admit. Plymouth had spent the past week saying his goodbyes, trying to find the words that would explain how much he loved them and how much he didn't want to leave them.

Plymouth didn't want to leave them. He and Virginia had spent so long helping Uncle James care for them that he didn't want to imagine what it would be like for them to handle that alone.

"It'll be okay, Plymouth. You can rest. You've done such a good job caring for them. We can take it from here," Uncle James had said, a sad smile on his face. Virginia had just hugged him, silent tears sliding down her face.

Plymouth didn't want to die in front of them, not like so many of their siblings had, their deaths sudden and unexpected. Plymouth insisted he and Maine should be alone. That none of their siblings should watch.

They had all agreed.

Well, all but Massachusetts Bay, poor, sweet Massachusetts Bay, who cared far too much guilt already, whose baby face was marred by a deep-set guilt.

Plymouth knew he blamed himself for what was going to happen to Plymouth and Maine. Plymouth thought he was being stupid. Massachusetts Bay didn't want them to die. But it wasn't his choice to make. He never even played a role.

After all, it was hard to play a role when no one thought you existed.

"Bay, you shouldn't come to watch us die," Maine said, her voice slow and gentle. Massachusetts Bay shook his head.

"I have to. Please. This is my fault. Maine. Plym—*Dad*. Please," Massachusetts Bay begged, tears in his eyes. Plymouth shut his eyes, feeling tears well up in them, before opening them again, signing.

"Massy, you know this is going to haunt you, right? You don't have to watch this. Death is...death leaves scars," Plymouth said, a hand on Massachusetts Bay's shoulder, looking his pseudo-son right in the eyes.

"I know. But I need this," Massachusetts Bay said. Plymouth shook his head, pressing his forehead to Massachusetts Bay's.

"Please, son, don't punish yourself because you think you deserve to be punished for something outside of your control," Plymouth said before pulling Massachusetts Bay into a hug, feeling the boy shake from the force of his sobs.

"I don't want you to die! I don't!" he cried out as his tears continued to fall. Massachusetts Bay pulled away from the hug, trying his best to wipe the still-falling tears from his face.

"We don't want to leave you either, Mass!" Maine said, looking like she was about to start crying.

"We aren't truly going to leave you. We'll be watching you and everyone else from Heaven. We'll be with you in spirit." Plymouth said, placing a hand on Massachusetts Bay's chest, "Our lands will become yours, and we will always be a part of you in that way. I know you will make us so proud, and I know you will take such good care of our people and land."

Massachusetts Bay let out another loud sob before tackling Plymouth and Maine into a hug.

"I love you guys!" he said before releasing them, wiping the last of his tears from his face. Once again, Plymouth was struck by how *young* his brother looked, how much he deserved to be a child, and how much he didn't deserve to carry the guilt of his sibling's death like it was his fault.

It wasn't fair to do this to someone so young.

"We love you too, Bay. Now, I know Mama is playing a game with the others to keep them distracted. Do you want to join them now?" Maine asked. Massachusetts Bay shook his head.

"I want to stay." Massachusetts Bay declared. Plymouth's heart sank.

"Mass—"

"Not to punish myself. I just...I don't want you to die by yourselves. Let me...let me talk to you, tell stories or something. To make it peaceful." Massachusetts Bay said, looking up at Plymouth with determined eyes.

"Okay. I'd love to listen to your stories." Plymouth said before sitting down on the ground, Maine and Massachusetts Bay following him.

"Okay, so I was talking to Carolina, and you know how he always has those fun stories about ghosts?"

Plymouth closed his eyes, letting the voice of his little brother and pseudo-son wash over him. Massachusetts Bay was quite the storyteller, and Plymouth knew he was going to be one of the best someday.

As far as ways to die go, listening to your little brother tell you a story was a good way to die. It was like when Plymouth used to fall asleep to Uncle James' stories. As peaceful as closing your eyes and waiting for the world to fade away.

Plymouth sat there for a while, a soft smile on his face as he

listened to his little brother speak. Suddenly, Massachusetts Bay's voice cut out right as a creeping feeling slammed into Plymouth, choking him with the sudden rush of...of power throughout his body. He felt his body grow against his will, and his eyes flew open.

Maine and Massachusetts Bay were gone.

"MASSACHUSETTS!" Plymouth yelled, fear flooding through him. He needed—he had to—Plymouth ran off to where the others were. Massachusetts Bay had to be around here somewhere. It was Plymouth who was supposed to die.

Not...not him.

"MASSACHUSETTS!" Plymouth yelled again before seeing Virginia running towards him.

"Plymouth? What's going on?" she asked, fear in her voice.

"I can't...I can't find Mass. I can't find him! Maine is gone, and I think she has passed, but I can't...I can't find him, Ginny. I can't find Mass!" Plymouth said, breath catching in his throat. Virginia stared at him in shock.

"But that...Plymouth, you were supposed to die. Not Massy," Virginia said.

"He's not dead!" Plymouth snapped, "I'm just taking longer to die, that's all. Massachusetts isn't dead. He's the one that's supposed to live, not me! Nothing else has ever said otherwise."

"You have his flag, Plym. Your seal is gone," Virginia said, her eyes alight with sorrow. Plymouth looked down at his hands, seeing that they were now the bright red of the flag of Massachusetts Bay. Plymouth's stomach lurched, and he stopped a step back, the fear in his veins being replaced by pure, unadulterated horror.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no, no, no," he muttered, "No, no, I'm not that, I'm not. I'm Plymouth, and Plymouth doesn't exist anymore. I...no...no, this is all a nightmare, this can't be real. I'm not—I can't —"

"Plym, calm down. You're okay," Virginia said, her voice gentle and soothing like she was talking to a wounded animal instead of her brother.

"I killed him! Oh God, please forgive me. I wanted to enter your kingdom; I wanted to pass on. I didn't want this. Please, God, please strike me down and bring him back. He was supposed to live, not me." Plymouth prayed, falling to his knees and grasping his shaking hands tightly in prayer, "Forgive me, kill me, please, oh merciful God."

"Plym! Plym, stop!" Virginia said, grabbing him by the hands and forcing him to look up at her. Virginia was crying. Plymouth was crying.

When did that happen?

"I already lost two siblings today. I'm not losing another. Plym, please," Virginia said, her eyes pleading. Plymouth had known her his entire life, and never once had he seen her like this. For a moment, he felt like a newborn colony again, sick and weak, looking to Virginia for guidance.

Maybe they both helped Uncle James raise their siblings. But before that, Virginia helped raise him.

"I don't wanna be Massachusetts Bay," Plymouth cried, feeling like he was crumbling to pieces.

"I know, I know," Virginia said, her voice soothing and gentle as she pulled Plymouth into a hug, which Plymouth leaned into eagerly, gripping to her like she was his lifeline, fingernails digging into her skin, "It's okay. You're gonna be alright. Maybe this is something like what happened to Port, New, and Wick. We'll figure it out. But you gotta calm down."

Plymouth nodded, trying to even out his breathing and blink through the tears, trying to calm himself down. Plymouth eventually pulled away from the hug, collapsing back down on the ground.

He was tired. Looking back at his hands, Plymouth couldn't help but think they looked as if they were stained by blood.

In a way, he supposed, they were.

They were stained with the blood of Massachusetts Bay.

What's In A Name?

Virginia hated that their life had to be full of so much death. It was bad enough so many of their siblings had died over the years, but the recent deaths seemed to be the worst. First, it was Massachusetts Bay and Maine, something Plymouth had never forgiven himself for, something that haunted him so, made him withdrawn and quiet.

Then, it was West Jersey. Her death haunted New Jersey the same way that Massachusetts Bay and Maine's deaths haunted Plymouth. At the very least, New Jersey had New York and Delaware, both of which could pull the third member of their little trio out of his grieving shell and get him to interact with the world again.

Now, it was Carolina. Carolina, who was so kind, with a wicked sense of humor. Carolina, another one of Virginia's siblings killed by circumstances outside of his control.

The only good thing about Carolina's death was the fact that it brought new life. Unlike with West Jersey, Maine, and Massachusetts Bay, his colony was not being absorbed by another but instead divided in two.

Virginia had hoped, like when West Jersey was born, that Carolina would remain and that they were simply going to get a new sibling.

Life was not that kind, and Carolina died and divided in two.

North Carolina and South Carolina were adorable, and Virginia knew they would never take the blame for their father's death. At least, she assumed Carolina would have been their father since they came from his divided land. There was simply no way to tell for sure.

Virginia had been there in Carolina's final moments, and now it was

her job to introduce the two children to the rest of their family.

"Come on, dears. I am going to introduce you to everyone else," Virginia said, holding out her hands, which the younger two colonies took, before leading them off to where the others had gathered. As she approached, she saw New York leap up from his seat on the ground, grabbing Delaware and dragging him over.

"More twins?" New York asked excitement in his voice but sadness in his eyes. Virginia nodded.

"Hello. I'm Lower Counties on the Delaware, but you can call me Delaware. Me and my idiot bror over there are twins like you," Delaware said, crouching down to the height of the Carolinas—and by God, if that name didn't send a pang of pain through Virginia.

North Carolina gasped, excitement in her eyes, and she jumped at Delaware, pulling him into a hug. Delaware laughed, looking upwards at New York.

"York, hjälp mig! We need to prove we are the superior twins!" Delaware said. New York just shook his head in amusement before picking up North Carolina. The newborn colony was only physically five, and New York carried her with ease.

"That's not fair!" South Carolina said, crossing his arms in the most adorable pout Virginia had ever seen, "You're big!"

"And thus we are superior—ow!" Delaware's claim was cut off by South Carolina kicking him in the side, and Virginia couldn't help but laugh at his plight.

"How about we settle this later? We still have many people to introduce North and South Carolina to," the older twins nodded, with Delaware picking himself off the ground, rubbing at his side. At the same time, New York lifted North Carolina above his head.

"Look North! You're flying!" New York said before picking up the pace of his walking, causing North Carolina to let out peals of laughter.

"Hey, I wanna fly," South Carolina said before kicking Delaware in

the shin, "Make me fly."

"Why are you so violent?" Delaware said, staring at his newborn brother in shock.

"Make me fly!" South Carolina just said, crossing his arms.

"I can't. I'm sorry. I'm not tall or strong enough," Delaware said. Delaware's status was weird. He was not an official colony of his own right and was actually a part of Pennsylvania. He had enough autonomy to exist, but he was weak and often felt sick. Some days, it was hard for him to do anything because of the weakness his status gave him. Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York tried to help, but Delaware was still limited.

"Why not?" South Carolina asked, looking upset.

"Delaware is very sick, South. If it says he can't do something, he can't. You can ask New York if he can make you fly when North Carolina is done, but Delaware cannot do that for you." Virginia explained, her voice gentle. South Carolina didn't look happy about it, but he didn't complain, just marched angrily away.

"I'm sorry, G—"

"You didn't ask to be sick. It's not your fault," Virginia said, ruffling Delaware's hair as he leaned into her side.

"I know. I just...I wish I didn't have to be sick. I wish I could be my own colony and not have to go to bed wondering if I'll be able to wake up the next morning." Delaware said. Virginia pressed a gentle kiss to his forehead.

"I can't do anything to help relieve those fears but remember, Portsmouth, Warwick, and Newport are still around because they have enough influence as cities to be around. You have far more than them. You will live," Virginia said. Delaware pulled away, crossing his arms.

"But they don't have to be sick."

"Del—"

"It's fine. I don't...I don't want to talk about it. It's too soon after Carey." Delaware said before walking off. Virginia shot a concerned look at her brother before rushing over to the newborn twins. New York had placed North Carolina back onto the ground, and Uncle James was standing by them. The rest of her siblings stood by awkwardly, and Delaware quickly joined them, leaning against New Jersey.

"I'll do you after you're introduced to everyone else, I promise." New York was telling South Carolina as she approached. South Carolina nodded.

"Are you ready to be introduced to everyone else?" Virginia asked.

"I already said hi to Uncle James. He's funny!" South Carolina said, his grumpy mood gone and replaced by a cheerful grin, "He says he'll help me and Northie become the superior twins."

"Verraad! Verraad! Betrayal by my dearest Oom? I can't believe it," New York said, smiling amusedly at their uncle. Uncle James rolled his eyes, but he was smiling too.

"Oh, are we taking Yorkie down a notch? I volunteer to help." Connecticut said, walking up to them, before smiling down at the younger two, "Hi, my name is Connecticut."

"You would you—" Virginia cut off New York by clapping her hands together.

"Okay, we can save this chitchat for later. Can we please just get through introductions before we all scatter and probably cause great harm to York."

"Uh, we don't have to do the last thing—"

"Great, glad we're all in agreement about needing to do introductions," Virginia said, cutting off New York again and getting an overdramatic gasp in return from the colony, "North, South, these are your older siblings, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations—"

"Wow, that's a long name!" North Carolina said, her eyes wide with

shock. Newport laughed.

"That's because my brother here is trying to make up for his height by having a long time," he said, pulling Rhode Island and Providence Plantations into a side hug. Rhode Island and Providence Plantations scowled and pushed Newport away.

"Fuck off, you're smaller than me," he said. Newport laughed again, dancing away to hide behind Warwick. It was nice to see the cities laughing and joking around. They were quiet more often than not, and they would have periods of time where they would sleep for years and not be around.

They always seemed to know when someone was about to die, though. They were always awake for that.

"Rhode Island is what we call him. His name's a bit too long," New Hampshire added, "I'm New Hampshire, by the way. The shortie making fun of Rhode Island's height is Newport."

"And I'm New Jersey, a great way to add to the very confusing list of people who have new in their names," New Jersey chimed in, a forced grin on his face. He wasn't all that used to his new name. Of course, he was actually using it, unlike Plymouth.

Virginia gave a concerned look to said brother, not liking how...blank his face looked. She would have to talk to him later. Between West Jersey and Carolina, he was only becoming more withdrawn.

Virginia was worried he would start disappearing and sleeping for long periods like the cities were doing.

Virginia was broken out of her thoughts when Warwick and Portsmouth introduced themselves.

"And who's that?" North Carolina asked, pointing at Plymouth.

"That's the countryhuman of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, but his name is—" Virginia was cut off by South Carolina walking over to Plymouth and sticking out his hand.

"Hi, Massachusetts Bay!" he said loudly. The world seemed to freeze, and Plymouth flinched, a shudder going through his body and Virginia watched her little brother begin to fall apart again. Plymouth's face was consumed by so much pain that it looked like it physically hurt him.

"Actually, South, his name is—" Virginia began, desperate to salvage the situation before Plymouth started begging for God to strike him now again, a prayer she had heard far too many times over the last twenty years.

"No Gin. It's okay." Plymouth cut off, causing Virginia to recoil in shock.

"What?" she gasped incredulously. Plymouth willingly wanted to be called Massachusetts Bay? He wasn't going to protest it? To scream and cry and break down in her arms again?

"I...I..." Plymouth began before stopping, licking his lips, "I need to get used to it. And...it's better for the young ones to know me as what I am, not as what I was. It'll prevent...confusion."

"Are you sure?" Virginia pressed, concerned. She knew that Plymouth felt he needed to get used to the name eventually, or at the very least before they got through to their father about their existence, but the reaction he just had to being called Massachusetts Bay was visceral.

"*Yes*," Plymouth said harshly before turning to North and South Carolina. "My name...name is Mass...Massachusetts...Bay. Just....call me Massa...Massachusetts."

Every word sounded like it hurt him to say, like it caused him physical agony to force them out of his mouth. Virginia was going to be talking to him later about that. Once they were alone. It seemed Plymouth didn't want to make a scene.

Sharing a look with Uncle James, Virginia could tell he felt the same.

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

"Plym, we need to talk," Virginia said, cornering Plymouth a few days after the birth of the twins.

"No, we don't," Plymouth said, turned away.

"Okay, let me rephrase that. *Massachusetts Bay*," she said harshly, noting Plymouth's full-body flinch. "We're going to talk."

Plymouth stopped, turning back to face her, eyes wet and face distraught.

"I *have* to, Mom. I have to," Plymouth said. Virginia walked over and embraced him.

"I know, I know," Virginia said, hating how she could feel her own voice breaking, "But not like this, not when it hurts you."

"But I need to. I've been Mass's land for twenty years now, and I'm still clinging to the name I used to go by. You don't hear Delly or York calling themselves New Sweden or New Netherlands, do you? I'm being stupid," Plymouth said, pulling away and refusing to make eye contact with Virginia.

"That's different, and you know it. Del and York are both replacements. They don't remember much about who New Sweden and New Netherlands were because they are different people! You were born to be Plymouth. Of course, you will cling to that, especially since you became Massachusetts Bay against your will. Those situations are nothing alike, so you shouldn't compare them." Virginia said, grabbing Plymouth's hand and giving it a gentle squeeze.

"I'm never going to be ready unless I make myself do this," Plymouth said, sounding so broken that it hurt Virginia to hear him this way.

"It's okay if you're never ready. It's okay if you want to be called Plymouth. There's not any humans demanding anything from you because we're in Father's head. You can be Plymouth for the rest of your life if that's what you need. No one will make you be

Massachusetts Bay if you don't want to." Virginia said. She saw tears begin to drip off Plymouth's chin, and when he spoke, there was a raw pain in his voice.

"I need to. Massachusetts Bay died and...I need to honor him and make sure he didn't die for nothing, and by denying the name and role he gave me, I'm being selfish!" Plymouth said.

"It's not your fault," Virginia said. Plymouth looked up at her, eyes red from crying.

"*Yes, it is,*" he said, voice resolute before he stormed off. Virginia shook her head, her own tears falling now.

"Oh, Plym," she muttered, "No one has ever blamed you."

The only person who blamed Plymouth was Plymouth, and he had been torturing himself about it ever since.

A Dead Man's Flag

Bolded words are Swedish (unless it's a Finnish word; I didn't want the formatting to look weird).

Delaware wasn't expecting a package from Tornedalians. While his great uncle and him talked, it was often through letters, and it wasn't super personal. He was a distant family member Delaware had been estranged from for hundreds of years after all. Letters were one thing. Packages were another.

Delaware shifted his coffee into his other hand, reaching down to scoop the package off the porch. It was light, the kind of package that clothes typically come in. Delaware walked inside, setting the package on his dining room table and stopping to pat Reed on the head.

Delaware then sat down at his table, taking great care in opening the package. Normally, he ripped them open with wild abandon, but Tornedalians wouldn't have sent him something for no reason, so Delaware took great care in opening the package, worried he might break something important.

Once the package was open, Delaware pulled out its contents, including a letter and a flag he hadn't seen before. The flag was in a similar design to a Nordic Cross, with the center of the cross itself being defaced by a black rhombus that the stripes of the cross went around. It was a lovely flag, but it did nothing to alleviate Delaware's confusion.

"What? Did he get a new flag?" Delaware questioned, staring at it in confusion. Why would Tornedalians have sent him a flag? Sighing, he stood up to go for his letter opener, hoping the letter itself would have some answers. As he did so, Reed attempted to jump up on him, ever the attention hog. Delaware laughed.

"Hey, boy, I love you too, but I have to find the letter opener. Uncle Tornedalians has sent me a package," Delaware said, walking over to his cabinet of nicknacks, pulling open a drawer, and searching through it. After pushing past old medals and so, so many spare buttons, Delaware found it, closing the drawer with a bump of his hip.

Delaware walked back to the table, opening the letter with the quick precision of someone who had been doing it for hundreds of years. He was eager to see what the letter had to say. He pulled out a letter, his mouth quirking into a slight grin at the neat and familiar handwriting.

Hyvä Ilta Pekka,

I know it must come as a surprise to see a package from me. But I needed to send it to you. You might be an American now and feel disconnected from your heritage over here (aside from your insistence on calling Ruotsi your cousin), but you are also the only child of Otso, and you deserve to have this.

This is the newly created flag of Metsäsuomalaiset.

Delaware gasped, dropping the letter in shock as he looked back at the flag. That was...that was his isä's flag—a flag created for his long-dead father. Delaware picked up the flag again, carefully, as if it was made of the finest silk. Tears were beginning to trace their way down his face as he imagined the blurry mental image he had of his father with the new flag.

Then Delaware pulled the flag close to his chest, hugging it as more tears came down.

People still remembered his Isä. They remembered and cared enough to make him a flag of his very own, a flag he would never get to see or wear.

"Isä, would you have loved this flag?" Delaware asked in his isä's language, placing it back down and wiping the tears from his face as he went to read the rest of his uncle's letter.

It surprised me to hear they were making a flag for Otso. The stubborn man never had one of his own. I'm unsure what he would have thought of it, but Muuna believes he would have liked it.

You should also know the meaning behind the flag. The green represents the forest's importance to slash-and-burn culture. The red represents fire and the Rowan tree, just like the one Otso had on his face until the day he died. I wonder if that's part of why they added it on there. The yellow represents the rye from slash-and-burn farming, and the black represents the soot of it. The color scheme is also meant to match the flags of the regions of Savonia and Tavastia, where Otso and his people were from.

Delaware smiled, looking back at the flag, a new appreciation growing in his chest. They didn't just half-ass a flag for his Isä. They put effort into giving it meaning, and now Delaware was crying again.

It was just so sweet, and it reminded him...it reminded him...

"Isä! You promised!" New Sweden pleaded. Isä's mouth quirked into a small little smile.

"Did I?" he asked, sounding slightly amused.

"Isä!" New Sweden exclaimed, causing his isä to laugh.

"Okay, okay. I know, Karl." Isä said, sitting down at the chair by the fire as New Sweden went to sit at his feet. New Sweden opened his mouth, but then...but then...

Delaware snapped out of the memory, realizing that he had managed to drop to the floor, Reed licking the tears off his face.

"Reed, off," Delaware said, looking back down at the letter still gripped in his hand. He didn't remember that before. It had been a long time since something triggered a new memory of him and his isä. Since he had gotten any of his memories back.

It was nice to have another hole in his life's story be filled, small as

it might be. Fragmented memories were better than no memories. Enough fragments helped him track down his uncle, and helped him know his isä better, and helped him give Sverige some insight on their father.

Delaware was happy with fragments.

Looking back down at the letter, Delaware read the last paragraph, smiling.

It's nice to see people care about Otso so much. They flew the flag at the Oslo City Hall recently as well. Otso never thought he would be more than a footnote in anyone's history book. It's nice to see that he was wrong, that more than just us care about his existence and passing.

I hope this provides some comfort to you.

Sincerely,

Arttu

Delaware then stood up, placed the letter back on the table, and grabbed his isä's flag. He walked outside to the flagpole he had hand hanging off his porch. Right now, it had his flag on it, but Delaware quickly took down his flag, throwing it over the porch railing before hanging up his father's flag.

Looking up at the flag hanging there, Delaware felt an overwhelming swarm of emotion. Laughing wetly, he wiped his eyes. Maybe no one else would ever know the flag's meaning or even recognize it, but that was okay with him.

Delaware still got to have a tangible peace of his isä, proof that he really did exist.

No flag could have a more important purpose.

Death of Unity

Death of the Korean Empire, requested by Violetsaredancing

August 22, 1910

"If you think I will be surprised by this, I am not," Korea said from his seat on the floor. He refused to die with dishonor or cowardice. Japan would be the one to kill him; he had known that for a long time, but he refused to let himself stoop to her level.

He refused to show her fear.

Japan had been killing his country for a long time. She was like a disease that infected and killed those around her, an insatiable hunger for power, leaving her ruthless and deranged.

She was a powerful enemy, but one with no sense of humanity.

Korea didn't know how things had gotten bad so quickly.

He had tried to be neutral, to stay out of world affairs. His neutrality was recognized by many countries, and Korea had foolishly assumed himself safe. Although he would not deny his close friendship with Russia, things had been good. He was working on reforms, on modernizing his country. He had been hopeful for the future.

Everything changed when Japan and Russia went to war. Japan, against all odds and expectations, won.

Then, there was no one to stop her from slowly taking over.

First, it was the Eulsa Treaty. Korea *hated* that treaty with every fiber of his being. It made him a protectorate of Japan and, more importantly, allowed Japan to start the process of isolating him from all of his friends and allies. Korea was no longer allowed to speak to other countries, to write letters, or do anything the likes of an independent country should do.

He was *Japan's* now, and it was Japan's job to take care of all that for him. Which, of course, meant he could no longer have any countryhuman friends and could only speak to Japan.

His people were not happy with the treaty either. Many of his politicians had committed suicide over it, and Emperor Gojong had helped to lead resistance. Korea had sent secret embassies to plead for his independence in other countries, while their cowardly governments began to pull out their embassies from Korea, leaving international matters in Japan's manipulative hands.

Nicholas II and Russia had given Korea and his emperor a bit of hope when they secretly invited them to the Hague Conference in 1907, but their emissaries were denied access, Korea was prevented from leaving his home by Japan, and the Japanese Korean Amry crushed any public dissonance.

And crucially, Emperor Gojong abdicated, leaving Emperor Sunjong to take the throne.

Things only got worse from there.

After that, Korea was forced into signing another treaty, with Japan practically holding her sword at his throat as he did so. This treaty of 1907 was even worse than the one that took away his nationhood, as it allowed Japanese officials to be employed in his government. And if that wasn't bad enough, any Japanese who served as advisors to his government were made a part of his central government.

Japan wasn't just controlling his external affairs, but his internal affairs as well.

Korea only felt weaker and sicker after that. Like he said, Japan was a disease, and the symptoms of her presence were only getting worse.

She garrisoned her focus in the palace and began disarming regiments of Korea's army, including his elite Pyeongyang Jinwidae.

"You don't need this silly army," Japan had said happily as she

dragged him out to watch the disarming, leaving him helpless to assist his people and ashamed that he could not do more for them. "I am your protector from those European colonizers. I will keep you and your land safe. You don't need to worry."

Korea didn't believe her. Japan was one of those people who talked a lot about who she was and what she did, all while choosing to remain blind to her own faults. Korea would not believe her because he was no fool.

Japan soon began dissolving regiments of his army, leaving Korea with no way to defend himself from her. Even the handpicked guards who had watched over his home for years were dismissed and replaced by Japan's people.

Korea's people did not just take that lying down, however, and many began to fight back. But it was hopeless. They simply did not have the manpower or ability to fight off her army. They would not be able to win.

When Japan told him, a sick sweetness in her voice, that she had suppressed that last of the "rebellions," the last of the righteous armies fighting for his independence, Korea had begun preparations for his death. There was no one left to fight for him anymore, and Korea knew that it was only a matter of time before Japan's bloodlust called for his death.

He had gone back to his home in Seoul and prepared for his death.

He cleaned his home and set aside precious artifacts and personal items from his human home to his small place in the Land-In-Between, something for his descendants to one day find. He had passed along the message of their location to Russia, the only person he trusted, the only one who really tried to save him from Japan.

The one who lost the war.

"I will keep it safe," Russia said, gently taking the letter from him, a small smile on his usually emotionless face.

Then Korea went home, and he waited for the inevitable, which brought him back to the moment Japan entered his home.

"Chōsen, it is time for you to sign the new treaty between our countries. Our people are waiting," Japan said. Korea stood up and turned to face her.

"I will not sign your treaty. I will not sign away my life for you. If you want to take my kingdom and my people, if you want to force them into your country, then you will kill me yourself. You will look me in the eyes and see me die and live with that guilt forever." Korea said, voice even and steady as he looked Japan straight in the eyes, looking the killer disease that had haunted him for the past five years in the eyes and daring her to do what she had been attempting for years. Japan smirked viciously.

"Fine by me."

Then, there was a flash of a sword, and Korea knew no more.

An Old Friendship

Morocco and America's friendship, requested by @Its_2am on Ao3. Bold is English.

"It's always lovely visiting your country, Qais. It's so beautiful." America said as he and Morocco walked through the streets of Rabat. Morocco snorted in amusement.

"Please, we both know you're only here for the food," Morocco said. America shrugged.

"Guilty. But how could I not? You're the greatest chef I know, and I adopted Louis," America said. Morocco shot him a teasing look.

"Ooo, better not let Louis hear that. Pretty sure it would be an insult to his pride."

"Please, my kids can turn anything I say into an insult. It's a national pastime of theirs." America pointed out. Morocco laughed.

"You're not wrong about that. I remember all the letters I used to get from you after your original thirteen got bodies. 'Morocco, you were the first to recognize me, and I don't trust France. How do you take care of children?' And then the Barbary Wars happened," Morocco said.

"An exciting start to a boring friendship."

"Please, like I'm not the closest friend you have," Morocco snarked.

"Well, Cuba did know about our DID first," America pointed out with a mischievous grin.

"Please. That was only because Cuba lived with you for four years, and you all were determined to keep people you liked from finding out because you cared so much about my friendship you didn't want to lose it." America shrugged.

"Yeah, fair enough. Where are we going to eat, by the way? I'm hungry."

"We're going to a little family-owned place. You'll love it." Morocco said. America grinned.

"I always do. Well, aside from that one place that gave me food poisoning. That sucked."

"I'm still sorry about that," Morocco said with a slight wince. That had not been a fun night for either of them.

"Oh, don't be. Lord knows my kids have given me food poisoning at least once a year." America said, waving his hand dismissively.

"Aside from Louis and Tex."

"Of course, of course. They're almost better chefs than you," America said.

"Good to know I still rank first on your chef list. It explains why you show up at my house at three am."

"Oh, come on, that was once," America protested.

"It shouldn't be happening to begin with," Morocco said, giving America a pointed glance.

"Hey, you're the one who gave me your address."

"Yeah, but it wasn't a request for you to *break in*," Morocco said.

"Well, someone has to keep you on your toes," America said.

"I got colonized by Spain and France," Morocco said. America winced.

"In a friendly way?" he corrected.

"For that, you're paying at the place," Morocco said.

"What? Qais, that's not fair! It's your country!" America

protested.

"Well, I've been a country for longer, so treat your elders respectfully and buy them food." Morocco pointed out. America rolled his eyes.

"Yeah, but I'm older by like fifty years or whatever," America said. Morocco felt his lips quirk into a slight grin.

"Or whatever. Real specific, Finn."

"I'm ending our peace treaty." America deadpanned.

"Please, you wouldn't know how to handle yourself if it wasn't for me," Morocco said, bumping his hip against America's, who rolled his eyes again, although there was a fond smile on his face.

"Yeah, yeah, sure," America said, "Thanks for being there."

Morocco smiled again, pulling his oldest friend into a small side hug.

"It's my pleasure."

The Meaning of Freedom

Philippines oneshot, requested by solosunset.

Philippines had been raised to hate the idea of tattoos. Sure, they were an important part of many of the cultures within his land, but old beliefs are hard to shake, especially when you are a colony trying to gain respect as a country.

The tattoo the Japanese Empire forced on him only made it worse.

Philippines didn't like thinking of that time, the pain, the humiliation, and the systematic destruction of himself and who he was, ready to be created into a glassy-eyed doll for the Japanese Empire to play with. Even when she...

If the puppet state wasn't bad enough, that bitch Laurel put him under martial law, only furthering the destruction. He lost his body, then his mind.

It was the kind of complete control he never wanted to feel again.

Philippines had been healing from it, relearning his identity, especially as an independent country. He got Hawai‘i to burn the tattoo off. He remade friends; he talked to replacements about coping with being a shadow of a person who once was. He was *healing*.

Then Marcos put him under martial law, and the hell started all over again.

At least Marcos was different. He wasn't trying to destroy who Philippines was and rebuild a new person tailored to fit his own interests. He just wanted Philippines to be docile and agreeable. Supportive of his agenda.

It sucked, but it was different. Philippines got to stay Philippines. It

also helped that he still had access to his support system. Kentucky, Hawai‘i, all of them were still there to help him through it. They helped make sure that he wasn't too far gone, that he wouldn't have to rebuild his personhood again after barely succeeding last time.

Philippines hoped he would get to keep his mind for a little longer than twenty-seven years this time.

But having his mind restored and given back to him was still a cause for celebration. He got together with a few friends to drink, both country and human, but he felt he had to do something more personal as well.

Philippines wasn't sure what to do, but his mind had wandered back to tattoos and the scar that marked all that was left of the one the Japanese Empire had given him.

Maybe he could get one to replace it.

The tattoo the Japanese Empire made him get read でくのぼう. Puppet. The figurative description, of course, the one that relates to a person or groups of people. That was what he was to her—a puppet.

As much as the Japanese Empire claimed to love him, something was deeply wrong with her. She claimed to love and care for him, claiming that she was better to him than New Spain, Spanish Empire, or America.

Sure, none of those people were great to him, but under them, he had his own mind. If he wanted to, he could yell at them, punch them, or even go to war with them. The Japanese Empire gave him none of those solutions. She enslaved his body and mind and took away his ability to speak, to fight, and to think.

He was her puppet. Nothing more than a mindless slave, a toy for her to play with.

Philippines wanted to get a new tattoo to replace that one, right on top of the scar or around it if putting on the scar wasn't possible. He wanted a new one that reflected who he was at this moment.

Not a puppet or a slave or a mindless government drone.

A free man with his own mind and will.

There was a word that he thought fit that.

Kawas.

There were lots of ways to translate it.

Deliverance from servitude or slavery; emancipation; liberation; freedom; release.

It fit.

Philippines had his mind back. He had been emancipated. He had been liberated, due in no small part to his friends in America.

He had his freedom.

His country's freedom and his own.

He had his mind back. He was free again. And if that ever got *fucking* taken from him again, he was going to make sure he had a physical marker that showed everyone he was a free man.

He was the Republic of the Philippines, and he would rather die before he was made anyone's puppet ever again.

The Outlier of Oceania

Madagascar meets her cousins in Oceania. Requested by TheEverlastingOne. Bold is English.

"French Polynesia, I don't think this is necessary," Madagascar pleaded with her sister as French Polynesia dragged her to one of her meetings with her Polynesian family. "I'm not Polynesian."

"Maybe not directly, but Malagasy is a Malayo-Polynesian language. And you're my sister, so everyone else will see you as a cousin, even if it is on my maman's side." French Polynesia said before turning back to Madagascar with a smile, "Besides, you're already here, so you might as well come."

Madagascar sighed, pushing aside the anxiety that she would be kicked out or yelled at for pretending to be part of their family as French Polynesia approached a group of...very small countries.

Madagascar knew they were islands and had seen them at UN meetings before, but she always forgot how small they were.

"**New cousin?**" Tonga said, raising an eyebrow at French Polynesia, "**This family tree is getting far too complicated.**"

"**Madagascar is my sister on Maman's side. Her language comes from the same family as ours, so I invited her to come along.**" French Polynesia explained.

"**Nice to meet you, Madagascar,**" The only tall country there said. He was taller than Madagascar expected any island country to be (then again, she was tall for an island country, and Greenland existed, so who was she to judge) with swirling tattoos covering her body.

"**Nice to meet you too,**" Madagascar said with a shy wave, "**Who are you?**"

"**My name is Māori. My people live in Aotea—in New Zealand,**" Māori said, surprising Madagascar. She thought French Polynesia's family consisted of only countries and territories, not indigenous peoples as well.

"There are indigenous peoples here?" Madagascar asked, turning to her sister, who was in a very focused conversation with Tonga, who seemed to be... interrogating French Polynesia about Madagascar's family?

French Polynesia turned away, grinning brightly, "Yes! Our family is very big, and we have plenty of indigenous peoples here, like Enana and Māori."

"I didn't realize how many of you there were," Madagascar said. There were at least fifteen people there, if not more.

"Not everyone comes, though, for various reasons." French Polynesia said casually.

"This isn't everyone?" Madagascar asked. Polynesia was a collection of islands. How could there be so many personifications that were Polynesian?

"Like I said, we're always open to more cousins joining, even if it is distant." French Polynesia said, "We are a region that holds family in very high regard. And if one of us decides you are family, the rest will usually agree."

"Usually?" Madagascar asked. French Polynesia gave a mischievous grin.

"Go ask Hawai‘i about her time as a country. She'll have so much fun explaining her actions." French Polynesia said.

"Welcome to the family. We welcome all peoples that are islands, even if they are African. Our ancestors were related, so we are, no matter how distant. You are welcome, and we will

not exclude you." Tonga said.

"**Thank you,**" Madagascar said. "**I am glad you don't find it offensive to let an African country into a Polynesian meeting.**"

"**You have a little Polynesian somewhere. That's enough.**" Tonga said, looking resolute.

"**And we let Siki bring Solomon, and he's not very Polynesian. We've never cared. You're just going to get made fun of for being tall like Māori does.**" Hawai'i said for that must be Hawai'i, based on French Polynesia's description.

"**Yes, please stay. I need another tall person to balance out all the little shorties we have here,**" Māori said, smiling.

"Welcome to the family!" French Polynesia chimed in, "Let me introduce you!"

Madagascar couldn't help but smile. It was nice to have other people who wanted to be her family, to give her something more than her Maman and her Maman's children.

It was nice to have people who wanted her for her African traits, not her French.

The 11th State [Non-Canon]

New York and America fluff requested by Brookylen3

America had never been happier. He thought he had been happy with his father, and maybe a part of him had been, but he had never been happier than he was now.

With his kids all getting their own bodies, with the ones still inside his head talking to him, with knowledge about James, and his independence, America was happy. He felt content.

His Constitution had been ratified with the inclusion of New Hampshire, so now America was just waiting for the rest of his states to get their bodies. The most recent one had been number eleven, New York, who had taken great delight in being reunited with his twin. He had calmed down since then but still took great pleasure in relishing in his newfound freedom.

It made America happy to see him happy.

North Carolina and Rhode Island and Providence Plantations had been pretty loud following New York's admission, mad that they were the last two left to get a body, and causing America plenty of headaches in the process. James had gotten them to quiet down, so America was left with the peace and quiet of his own thoughts.

"Dad?" New York said. America sighed, sitting up from where he was lying down on his bed. A father's work was never done.

"What is it, York?" America asked. New York winced.

"It's okay, I can—"

"No, no, York, it's okay. I don't mind. Just a bit tired," America said, giving his son a small smile. New York perked up and walked over to the bed, climbing next to America, "Are you okay?"

"I'm fine." New York said. America nodded, throwing an arm over his son's shoulders.

"Okay. You can always tell me if you need anything. I won't judge. You guys were in my head for years. I've learned to be a little open-minded," America said. New York groaned.

"That was terrible, Dad," America smiled.

"I have to make up for all the years I missed out on it," America said before running his hand through New York's hair.

"I hate my body." New York eventually said after a few moments of silence.

"Why's that?" America asked, concerned as he pulled his hand away.

"Back in your head. I looked...physically, I was, like, eighteen or something. Now I'm seven. I'm a child now. My wings are fluffy, and I can't fly with them and I hate it so much. I'm too old to be seven, not just in the usual country way but actually too old. I hate it." New York said, burying his face in his hands.

"I know. It must be awful to have everyone thinking you're a child when you've lived through and seen so much. I wish...I wish I could do something to help, do something to make your body seem older, but I can't. It'll catch up eventually. Delaware already looks eighteen. Your years will catch up. You just have to give it time." America said.

"I don't want to wait. I want to be my age now. I hate this. I hate having to be younger than Del and Jay. We're all the same age, practically, but they're adults, and I'm a fucking child, and it's the worst!" New York said, small wings flaring out in his frustration, angry tears pouring down his face.

"I'm sorry. I wish I could do something to help or to change things. But it's okay to be upset by this," America said, returning his hand to New York's hair, smiling as New York relaxed into his side.

"I know. Thank you for listening." New York said. America hummed out an acknowledgment.

"Would you like me to talk to the others about making fun of you or saying anything about your physical appearance?" America asked. New York shook his head, burying his face in his shirt.

"No. Don't want them to think I'm being dumb." New York said before pulling his face out of his shirt and looking up at America with wide eyes.

"You aren't being dumb. They've all gone through what you're going through right now. They'll understand," America said gently. New York yawned.

"Maybe. But don't tell them yet," New York said before burrowing into America's side. America kissed his son on the forehead.

"Alright. I won't. But if they're ever bothering you, let me know." America said. New York nodded.

"I will. Good night, Dad." New York said. America smiled fondly.

"Good night, New York." As his son slowly fell asleep in his arms, America couldn't help but be overwhelmed by the love he was feeling. It was amazing to have a son, to hold him and cherish him.

He knew New York hated being younger, but America was glad he got to see it now.

"I'm sorry I wasn't there for you when you were younger. I promise I'll be there for you now."

He would always be there for his children.

Celtic Brothers

Ireland and Scotland, requested by dyslexictryhard. Ireland and Scotland are both going to go by their Irish names cause it's Ireland narrating. So Éire for Ireland and Albain for Scotland.

"Are you sure Sasana or An Bhreatain isn't going to get mad at you for this?" Éire asked Albain, who laughed.

"What those two don't know won't hurt them. Besides, I know they're both acting pissy about your independence, but Sasainn is happy that he managed to take out your leg, so he doesn't see you as a threat anymore, and Crùn is busy with your kid," Albain said. Éire scowled, looking down at his injured leg.

Sasana had shot his kneecap out, and the damage was severe. The doctors said it probably wouldn't heal and that he should think about amputation, but Éire wasn't ready to commit to that yet. Until then, he was stuck in a wheelchair.

That was what the problem was. His house, his little farm that he had been building up secretly for decades, was not built for a wheelchair. Éire had already hired a young lad named Pádraig to help take care of the animals he was unable to look after due to his wheelchair, but the fact that he could barely move around his own house was becoming a bit of a problem.

"Sasana cuts out an eye, Bhreatain makes me half blind in the other one, and it's not until he's injured me one final time that I stop being a threat. Figures." Éire muttered bitterly.

"Should be lucky you were always seen as such a threat," Albain joked, but there was an understanding in his eyes.

"Lucky's not what I would call it," Éire said with a sigh, running a hand over the stubble on his chin, "Go raibh maith agat for doing this."

"'S e do bheatha. You deserve to be able to move around your home comfortably. But why'd you ask me and not your friend...Pàdraig?" Albain asked.

"Haven't seen you in a while. And...I missed spending time with you." Éire said. Albain smiled, fangs sticking out slightly.

"Missed spending time with you too," he said, patting Éire's hand with the tip of his tail as he returned his focus to the wall.

"You also know me better than most people, so I figured I could just tell you, 'Please make this house movable for me,' and you would know what to do to make me happy and not lose what I like about this place," Éire added. Albain laughed.

"That's also a good reason."

The two fell into a comfortable silence as Éire pulled out a book and began reading. Éire wasn't sure how much time had passed before Albain spoke again.

"As far as I'm aware, Crùn hasn't hit Èirinn a Tuath." the lion chimera said far too casually. Éire dropped his book in shock.

"He hasn't abused her? I figured out of all his colonies, he would hate her them most, being my child, a part of our island," Éire said. Albain let out a bitter laugh.

"That's what a' Chuimrigh and I thought as well. We had already been putting together plans for when things went wrong and always having someone keep an eye on her. But he hadn't done it yet. They don't talk much unless Crùn is ranting about how you're a mad, cruel, treacherous bastard, but he hasn't hit her, even if she starts getting mouthy," Albain said.

Despite the fact Éire had said that he would not hold any paternal feeling towards her, he couldn't help the concern that welled up inside him.

"Do you think it's another Haváí situation?" Éire asked. Albain shrugged.

"I have no idea. I think...best theory me or a' Chuimrigh can come up with is that maybe he realizes that beating Tuath might push her back to you and help spark a reunification. Trying to stay on her good side to avoid losing what he has. Sure, you've been fighting him and Sasainn since the beginning, but he can't deny that he pushed you further and further to your breaking point every day. I think he wants to avoid that."

Éire exhale a slow breath. While he was glad that Tuaisceart Éireann wasn't being abused like so many other colonies of the British Empire, he was still worried.

"Albain?" Éire asked. Albain hummed an acknowledgment, "If he does start hitting her, or if things take a bad turn, could you tell me?"

"I thought you weren't going to be her father?" Albain asked. It wasn't an accusation or even an insult, but it made frustration burm in Éire's chest all the same.

"*Albain*," Éire said, something more desperate in his voice. Albain looked back at Éire, something akin to shock in his eyes.

"Okay. I will. Just...don't take things too far," Albain said. Éire let out a bitter laugh.

"I'm a fucking cripple, and I can't see without glasses 'cause too many people have shoved knives in my eyes through my history. I can't *do* anything, Albain. That's the point." Éire said. Albain walked over and leaned down to pull Éire into a hug. Éire buried his face into the fur on Albain's chest and let a few frustrated tears exit his eyes.

"It'll be okay, Èirinn. Everything will work out eventually," Albain said, pulling away. Éire wiped the tears from his eyes.

"I know...Go raibh maith agat, Albain. For being here."

"It's my pleasure, Èirinn."

The Boston Christmas Tree

A Canadian Province and a US State interacting, requested by TheAgenderYeehaw

On the hundredth anniversary of the Halifax Explosion, not only did Nova Scotia give Massachusetts its annual Boston Christmas Tree, but the Mayor of Boston, the Mayor of Halifax, and the premier of Nova Scotia unveiled a plaque telling the story of the friendship between Nova Scotia and Massachusetts.

Although Nova Scotia would really say that she and Massachusetts were more like cousins that were bitchy and far too gossipy for their own good.

"Now we have a fancy plaque to go along with those trees you keep sending me," Massachusetts joked as he and Nova Scotia smiled up at this year's Boston Christmas Tree.

"Good. Maybe it'll help with your memory. I know you old men have such a problem with that," Nova Scotia joked, grinning widely as her cousin groaned. She loved poking fun at her cousin. Ir was so easy to get a rise out of him sometimes.

"I'm barely a year older than you, Ishbel. I don't want to hear it." Massachusetts said, sounding tired.

"They say men's memories deteriorate faster," Nova Scotia added. Massachusetts sighed deeply, but he was grinning slightly.

"You just made that up."

"Did I?" Nova Scotia asked, tilting her head to the side. Massachusetts groaned.

"Next time a ship blows up in Halifax, you're on your own. I'm not helping you out more if it means I have to deal with this shit," he said. Nova Scotia hit him on the back of the head.

"Ow? What was that for?" Massachusetts asked, hand on the back of his head.

"Making an insensitive joke. I'm still traumatized from that," Nova Scotia said. Massachusetts shot her a confused look.

"How? You weren't there. We were both off fighting in the First World War." Massachusetts asked, sounding genuinely confused. Nova Scotia patted him on the shoulder.

"Maybe you'll understand better when you're older."

"Wait a minute! First, I'm the old man whose memory is deteriorating, and now I'm younger than you?" Massachusetts asked, bumping her slightly with his hip as he smiled at her. Nova Scotia shrugged.

"Strange how the world works like that," she said.

"I'm sending that photo of you from The Pancake Incident to your children," Massachusetts deadpanned, pulling out his phone. Nova Scotia leaped at the man, trying to snatch his phone out of his hand.

"Patrick Samuel Washington, you will not," Nova Scotia said harshly, causing her cousin to laugh.

"Bold of you to think you can stop me," Massachusetts said before taking off down the streets of Boston.

"You get a home-field advantage! That isn't fair!"

"Suck it, Unicorn Head!"

We Should Know Who We Are

Finland and Estonia, requested by 39based, title provided by NewLostIslands

Finland was excited to meet the new country of Estonia. He had heard many things about the country's people, and he knew that they were of a similar culture to him. He knew that they were cousins, perhaps, or related in some sort of way. That interested him greatly. The only sort of family he ever had as a child was through the Russians, people with a very different culture and language.

If he could form some sort of relationship with this new cousin, if this supposed cousin really was family, then Finland could, for once, have a relationship with the side of his family that was like him.

Finland had invited the nation to Helsinki and was quick to receive a response that Estonia was willing to meet him.

So now here Finland was, sitting in a room and waiting for his maybe-cousin to arrive.

"Hello, Estonia," Finland said as the young nation entered the room. Finland was quick to look the new nation over. He looked about fifteen, typical for a newborn nation. His flag consisted of three horizontal stripes: blue, black, and white.

"Hello, Finland. Thank you for meeting with me," the young nation said, sounding nervous.

"You're welcome. I was interested when I heard the news of another Finnic country being born. It will be nice to have more members of our extended family independent from Russia." Finland said, trying his best to calm the younger nation's nerves.

He remembered how nerve-wracking it was to talk to other

countries alone for the first time, wondering if they were taking you seriously, wondering if they were mocking you behind your back.

"Are we related?" Estonia asked. Finland shrugged.

"We're both Finnics, so we must be. I don't know how far back as Russ—the Russia before the current one—wasn't a fan of giving me information about my mother. He wanted me to be his, so he hid everything that could pose a threat to that idea." he explained.

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be. You weren't alive when he made those choices. You could have done nothing to help. It's okay," Finland reassured. Estonia's shoulder slumped.

"I know. I just...there's a lot of pressure on me right now. It's been easier just to say I'm sorry for things outside of my control and try to move forward." Estonia said with a small smile.

"Moving forward. That's something a lot of people have been eager for," Finland mused. Estonia let out a bitter laugh.

"I mean, with the last war, you can see why. Everyone wants to rebuild. And us new countries? We want to establish ourselves and prove that we are not the empires that once controlled us but different people within our own histories." Estonia said. Finland's face twitched into a slight grin.

He liked his cousin so far.

"You aren't wrong about that," Finland said before standing up and holding out his hand for Estonia to shake. "I think we are going to be good friends."

Estonia looked excited at that and quickly stood up to shake Finland's hand.

"Glad you think so." the smaller country said.

The New Father

Canada and Britain the first time they are alone after Canada becomes a British colony, requested by NewLostIslands. Bonus Scene from The Shot Heard Around the World.

When Quebec arrived at Britain's house, he was quick to be ushered away into an office as Britain's existing colonies led the other newly acquired colonies away to different rooms.

"Britain?" Quebec asked cautiously, unsure of what was happening.

"Remember what I told you before?" Britain asked. Quebec nodded.

"That I was to be the best of your new colonies because I had a lot of British people living within my lands?" Quebec asked nervously, feeling like he was being tested.

"Very good. Well, I want to get into that more. I'm sure you know that we have had to remove people who do not sign an oath of loyalty to my empire. I do not tolerate disobedience, you see. But I know that this land might not all be yours and that in your land and against your will, there are people harboring sentiments of disloyalty to me." Britain said. Quebec frowned.

"I promise I will not be dis—" Quebec began before he was cut off.

"Oh, I'm sure you won't," Britain said, sounding dismissive like he didn't even care what Quebec was trying to say. Quebec didn't like to make trouble, and despite his father's and grandmother's resentment of Britain, Quebec and the other colonies given up were told to be obedient because that was their role in society. Quebec knew many of his fellow former French would have trouble with that, but it was their role, and Quebec would try his best to fulfill that.

Britain reached into his desk and pulled out a piece of paper.

"This is an oath of loyalty. It is a document that you are required to sign. It is a...test of your loyalty, we shall say. It is also the document that, by law, will make you my child," Britain said. Quebec startled at the last part. Britain wanted to replace his father, so soon after he had died?

"But my father just died today, surely—" Quebec began before Britain grabbed him by the throat and slammed him against the wall.

"Is that a declaration of unloyalty?" Britain asked, his voice sounding so kind as Quebec's fingers scratched against Britain's hands, trying to get some air back into his lungs, "Stop being overdramatic. Put your hands down and *listen to me*."

Britain's voice changed, becoming low and dangerous, and his grip on Quebec tightened. Quebec let out a strangled gasp and dropped his hands to the side, hoping the appeasement would calm Britain's rage and free him.

"Very good, Quebec," Britain said, his voice patronizing and full of false cheer as black spots began appearing in Quebec's vision, the lack of air making him dizzy. "Now, answer me. Was that a sign that you don't want to be loyal to me?"

Quebec shook his head, trying his best to force out a no. The words did not come easily, but eventually, he was able to force out a tiny, whispered no, and Britain released him. Quebec fell to the ground, gasping for air and relaxing as air made its way into his abused lungs.

"I'm sorry, Quebec. I didn't want to do that to you, but like I said, I do not tolerate disloyalty, and it is better to teach the lesson once and make it stick than have to teach it repeatedly. I'm sure you understand," Britain said, putting a gentle hand on Quebec's shoulder before helping the colony stand, leading him to the armchair in the corner of the room. Quebec collapsed into the chair, and Britain patted his shoulder.

"Do you need a minute to catch your breath? We don't have to

proceed until you've recovered," Britain said, his voice sounding so painfully kind and understanding compared to the pain of his rage. Quebec knew then that he would have to do everything he could to keep this kindness, everything he could to avoid provoking that rage.

"No...we can continue," Quebec said, the act of speaking making him feel out of breath.

"You don't sound like you're ready. We can wait a bit longer. Don't feel like you have to rush yourself. Your health and safety is my top priority." Britain said. Quebec gave him a confused look.

"But—"

"That was just punishment. It's not common unless you are disloyal or choose to disobey me. As long as you're a good colony, one that listens and obeys, you won't have to deal with any of that again. Unless, of course, one colony is misbehaving so badly that it is better I punish the whole just to ensure no similar ideas come out. But I promise you, Quebec, that that is not something I want or like to do but rather something I do out of necessity and love." Britain said, grabbing Quebec's hand and squeezing it gently.

Quebec nodded, feeling conflicted. On one hand, his grandmother and father had never touched him like that. But on the other, Quebec had been a French colony since birth. Of course, he would not need to prove his loyalty to them in the same way Britain needed him to. Furthermore, Quebec was descended from Britain's worst enemy. It made...it made sense why he would go that far.

"I'm...I apologize for my disobedience," Quebec began as soon as his throat felt better, picking his words carefully to avoid inciting the empire's temper any further. "My...my French father passed away today, and grief clouds my mind. I did not mean to offend you. I just do not want to forsake the man who raised me on the day of his death. I apologize."

Quebec then bowed his head, waiting and willing to accept whatever punishment that would bring him. But he was surprised to hear Britain laugh as a hand was placed on his head.

"I'm not asking you to disown your father. I know his loss will be hard on you. What I'm asking is for you to acknowledge me as your father so my nobility and my leaders can be safely assured that you are a loyal colony and will not betray us for France. They get...somewhat unreasonable when it comes to French things, and I want to ensure that they will not advocate for your death or for you to be dissolved into another colony. This is less of a loyalty thing and more of a way to protect you," Britain explained, putting a gentle hand on Quebec's chin and forcing Quebec to look him in the eyes, "Do you understand?"

Quebec stared into his eyes, looking for any trace of deceit and finding none. Britain was telling the truth. It only served to make Quebec feel like a fool. Britain released his chin, and Quebec slowly dropped his head.

"Yes," Quebec said, feeling better. That...that made sense. Britain's extreme reaction was done out of love and necessity, just like he said. Quebec had just been dramatic and must have caused Britain to panic. Britain did say he was looking forward to having Quebec there the most and that Quebec had the most potential.

"Are you ready to sign it now?" Britain asked. Quebec nodded, standing up.

"I am," he said, trying his best to sound confident. Britain nodded and pointed at the chair at the desk. Quebec quietly sat down in the chair, preparing to look over the oath of loyalty he was about to sign before Britain pushed a pen into his hand.

"Sign," Britain commanded. Quebec opened his mouth, preparing to protest, before shutting it. He didn't need to look it over. It was fine. Britain probably just wanted to get this over with since Quebec had already dragged it on long enough.

With a quick flourish, Quebec signed his name, both his old French one and his new British one, just to be safe. As soon as he finished, Britain took the paper away, placing it on the bookshelf above Quebec's head as Quebec returned the pen.

"See, was that so hard?" Brit—Father asked as he began running a

hand through Quebec's hair.

"No," Quebec said, feeling silly for having made such a big fuss about it when he had just planned to profess his loyalty from the beginning.

"No, what?" Father asked.

"No, Father," Quebec said, cheeks turning red in embarrassment. He hated this. He hated being treated like a child. But...better to be treated like a child than to be punished. Father was probably just ensuring that Quebec got the hang of things as quickly as possible.

"Very good. Like I said, you'll be the one to adapt to my household the fastest. You have all the traits of a good colony, Quebec. Once I am done purging your lands of the disloyal, I think you will be in a position where you will never need to be punished again." Father said.

"Really?" Quebec asked, nervous. Father smiled.

"Really."

The New Century

Turn of the century celebration, requested by NewLostIslands

America could hardly believe it. This was not the first turn of the century he had lived through, but the first where he was an independent country. It was hard to believe that just twenty-four short years ago, he had declared independence, that he had become a country.

"You've changed a lot," James said. America laughed.

"I suppose I have," he said, looking back up at the stars from his newly built home in his capital.

"Dad, can we please go join the others at the party? Please?" Territory Northwest of the River Ohio, better known as Ohio due to his long name, asked. America sighed, looking back up at the sky, before making his way to the front door.

"Of course we can. I can't deny you and Sippi a chance to hang out with your siblings after all," America said, stepping inside.

"Daddy!" Tennesse said, running over and jumping into America's arms. America laughed.

"Hey, Ness? How are you doing?" he asked. Tennesse had been a territory since 1790 but recently got statehood in 1796, meaning she had only recently reached her stable age of fourteen, something she always seemed to forget, with her habit of running at people and expecting them to be able to catch her. America had seen Rhode Island and Providence Plantations barreled over time and time again.

He was pretty sure some of the other New England states were encouraging it.

"Great! I'm so excited for this," Tennessee said, burying her face in

the crook of his neck. America laughed, feeling warmth well up in him.

That was another thing he couldn't believe about the past twenty years. His children. Right now, he has eighteen children; sixteen of them are states, and two of them are territories that live inside the little world in his mind. Learning about them, learning about James and Rebecca, was shocking at first, but it quickly grew to be one of the most extraordinary experiences of his life.

He still felt an aching grief when he remembered all of those that he never got to talk to properly, who he never got to meet because he was choosing to remain ignorant to all of the colonies and people who shared a body with him.

It was his biggest regret.

But that's why he did his best to spend time with his kids now. The ones he neglected and the ones he recently had. He loved them with every fiber of his being and couldn't imagine hurting them, not the way his father—the way Britain hurt him.

He had done it once when New Jersey and New York were fighting over their border. As soon as he did, he panicked, started crying, and apologized. It was too horrifying to even think about doing it. He didn't understand how his father could have done that to him and his siblings.

He had experienced it once, with the United Colonies of New England, for those forty-three years they got together before his father's Dominion of New England ended her life. America never resented his brother for that. At least, he tried not to. Every time he brought it up with his father, things got fuzzy; either his father took control, or James did.

James still refused to tell him what had gone down between Britain and him in those three years.

However, although he didn't know it then, the New England colonies that existed within his mind wanted him gone and blamed him for the death of their sister. They were upset, and in turn, they

convinced America to be upset. It was a confusing time. He didn't know how he felt because so many people dictated how he should feel then.

That was a hard time, and America had never really considered how...terrible it was to hurt your children at that time, as he and New England both lived with Britain at that time. It wasn't until independence that he realized.

So America held his second youngest daughter close and swore to be better, promising that she would never have the childhood he and his eldest (living) thirteen had.

Whatever had happened in the past would stay in the past. America would have to do better from here.

He swore to.

"I'm glad you are. Now, let's go join the others. I'm sure they're missing us," America said, putting Tennesse now and grinning as she skipped towards the kitchen.

"You are wrapped around their fingers," James said, voice warm and fond.

"Shut up," America responded, but there was no heat in his voice as he followed Tennesse into the living room.

"Happy turn of the century, Father!" Massachusetts said upon America's entry to the room. America smiled at his eldest son as Vermont approached him, grabbing his hand and dragging him onto the couch.

"It's time you for to take a break. I know being a country, especially a new one, is stressful—"

"Is that why you became a state?" South Carolina cut in, causing his twin sister to start laughing.

"Shut it! So, I know that it's stressful, but you need a break," Vermont finished. America laughed.

"Don't worry. I already promised James, Mass, and Ginny that I would not be working at all today," America said. Vermont smiled.

"Good. 'Cause if you did, I was gonna get Kenny to help me hold you down," Vermont joked.

'America, please try and do some work. I want to see this," James said.

"Well, James is interested in seeing that," America commented. Vermont's eyes lit up with excitement, and he turned to Kentucky.

"Hey, Ken! Get Papa!" Vermont yelled, prompting the first and only state to have never been a territory inside of America's head prior to his birth to come running over, leaping into America's lap.

"Oof. Hey Ken," America said, looking down at his son, who beamed up at him.

"Hey, Pa! You've gotta stay. Ginny's orders." Kentucky said.

"And mine!" Massachusetts chimed in.

"Mainly Ginny's," Kentucky whispered, causing Ohio to begin laughing.

"Triplets! Get out of the kitchen!" Virginia yelled, and America watched as New Jersey, New York, and Delaware all ran into the living room, crashing into Maryland.

"Mary! Are you alright?" America asked as Kentucky scooted off his lap, allowing him to stand up and walk over to his daughter, who gave him a shaky smile.

"I'm fine, Dad!" she said, standing back up with the help of Delaware, who gave her an apologetic smile.

"Good. Next time, be more careful, boys," America said, turning to the three of them. New York and Delaware nodded, New Jersey joining them after a quick elbow to the ribs from New York.

"But if they were careful, they wouldn't be them," Pennsylvania said, leaving the kitchen with a smile on her face.

"Now, food is ready, so unless you are planning on starving to death, come!" she said, gesturing for them to follow her into the dining room, which seemed to shrink each time America had a new child.

"At this rate, we're going to need to eat all family meals outside or in a banquet hall," James joked. America rolled his eyes.

"Banquet hall is a bit of an over-exaggeration, James. There's only so much land left for me to turn into states," America commented. New Hampshire let out a snort of amusement from behind him.

"You say that now, Dad, but you have no idea. What if you somehow get a bunch of land? Then you would have more land to make into siblings, and then we really will need a banquet hall," New Hampshire dramatically declared. America just shook his head and rolled his eyes before taking a seat at the head of the table, Virginia to his right and Massachusetts sitting on the other side of the table.

America looked around the table, feeling pride well in his chest as he looked at all of his children sitting there: Virginia, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Maryland, Connecticut, Rhode Island and Providence Plantations, New Jersey, New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee, and Kentucky.

He thought of the two children and brother who shared a body with him.

America couldn't help but smile.

He couldn't wait to see what the nineteenth century had in store for them.

Flight Lessons

some little bird kids learning to fly, requested by NewLostIslands

"Are you sure this is a good idea?" Delaware asked, watching his twin from the bottom of the small cliff.

"Of course it is! Birds can fly, so why can't I?" New York responded.

"Yeah, but you aren't a bird, dumbass. You're a state," New Jersey snarked from beside Delaware.

"We're bird states! Wales can fly, so we can too!" Pennsylvania said from beside New York. Both of the states had been born with wings from their seal, and both were eager to see if they could fly. While their dad had forbidden them to do it without him, Massachusetts, or Virginia, they snuck off and found a place to practice. With New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware there for moral support, of course.

"I hope you crash, Penn!" Maryland yelled. Pennsylvania grinned and took a running start before leaping off the cliff. Her wings caught her, and she began gliding.

"Yes! Yes, I did it!" Pennsylvania cheered before crashing into a tree, groaning as she became tangled in the branches. Maryland began laughing, and Delaware winced.

"You okay, Penn?" New Jersey asked. Pennsylvania groaned before sticking a thumb in the air. New Jersey nodded as Delaware took the thumbs up as a cue to start laughing.

"Your turn, Yorkie!" Maryland called up at New York as her laughter calmed down.

"Watch and learn, Penny! This is how we fly, and look where we are going," New York said patronizingly as Pennsylvania climbed out of the tree. Pennsylvania stuck her tongue out at her brother, who just

laughed.

New York then got his running start, preparing for his own first flight. He quickly caught himself and began gliding, swerving to avoid the trees. Unfortunately, that seemed to throw him off balance, and his glide became wobbly.

New York flapped his wings, trying to regain balance, but his inexperience won out, and he tilted to the side, falling to the ground with a loud thud.

"Shit!" Delaware cursed, rushing over. New York was blinking up at the sky, face dazed. His breaths were short and ragged, and he clearly had had the wind knocked out of him. "Deep breaths, Yorkie, deep breaths."

New York's breaths eventually evened out, and he let out a little chuckle.

"That wasn't fun," he said before shooting a mischievous grin at Pennsylvania, "But at least I was able to watch where I was going."

"Yeah, 'cause that worked out well for you," Pennsylvania snarked back. New York rolled his eyes, standing up and flexing his wings.

"Nothing's broken, only bruised, so I think I'm ready to try again," New York said. Maryland raised an eyebrow.

"Try again? After that fall?" she asked. New York shrugged.

"Gotta fall to fly," he answered.

"Wow. That made you sound almost intelligent," New Jersey snarked.

"I thought you were going to be here for moral support."

"Moral support, mocking you, same thing, really," New Jersey answered with a shrug. New York rolled his eyes and walked away, heading back up the small trail they had made up to the top of the tiny little cliff.

"You trying again, too?" Delaware asked, turning to Pennsylvania. She nodded.

"Can't let New York outdo me," she said cheerily before following New York up the path. Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey back away from New York's crash site, heading back to their spot under the trees.

"Anyone else getting a little bit worried that those two are going to hurt themselves?" Maryland asked. New Jersey and Delaware both made noises of agreement, and Maryland nodded. "Okay. Glad it's not just me."

The three states watched as New York and Pennsylvania threw themselves off the cliff side again and again, staying in the air longer each time. They stayed there long into the day until the sun began to set.

"We better head back now! We're breaking enough rules as it is. Let's not give Da a reason to come after us," Delaware said.

"You're no fun," Pennsylvania said, "but you're right. If Dad sees that we snuck out to practice flying without him, we'll be in so much trouble."

"Oh, I would say you're already in trouble."

The five states froze as they heard their father's voice from behind them.

"Aw, rats."

A Little Brother's Guidance

Michigan was excited to meet his little brother. He was waiting for his Uncle James to walk the new territory over to him and Indiana from wherever the new territory appeared. His head was leaning against Indiana's shoulder, and she was rubbing her thumb over his knuckles.

He was excited to be an older brother. Michigan had been the baby for so long that he was excited to have someone younger than him around, both because Michigan could baby them and his older siblings would baby him less.

He knew they would never stop, though. Not when Michigan was blind.

Well, blind wasn't entirely accurate. Michigan could see sometimes, like when he was in charge of the body or looking out of his Dad's eyes.

But never anything that wasn't real. Anything in the little world they had in his father's head was not visible to him. They weren't sure why. Uncle James thought it was because Michigan couldn't imagine visual things, even if he was trying to remember something that he *had* been able to see. Indiana thought it was because Michigan was going to be blind when he got his body and could only see now because Dad could.

Michigan didn't really care what was causing it. It didn't change the fact that he couldn't see.

Michigan smiled as he heard footsteps approaching, knowing that it was his uncle and little brother making his way over to them. Indiana released his hand, and Michigan pulled his head off of her shoulder.

"Illinois, these are two of your older siblings," Uncle James said as Michigan turned his head to face the sound of his uncle's voice.

"Hi! I'm Illinois!" his little brother chirped. His high-pitched voice hinted to Michigan that his brother was probably very young physically.

"Hello, Illinois. I'm Indiana, and this here is Michigan," Indiana said. Michigan smiled, waving in what he hoped was the direction of his little brother.

"Hello, Illinois."

"And for your benefit, Michigan, Illinois is about physically five, with brown hair and blue eyes. He has eagle wings like you, and they are so adorable. He had freckles and—" Uncle James began before Illinois cut him off.

"Why are you describing me to Mishhh—Mitchigan?" Illinois asked. His voice was so innocent and sweet, and Michigan could now tell that Illinois had a lisp as the new territory stumbled over the s sounds in his speech, even pronouncing Michigan's name wrong.

He didn't care. Hearing his little brother stumble over his speech was adorable, and Michigan could feel warmth blooming in his chest. Was this what his siblings felt when he was born?

No wonder they babied him.

"I can't see Illinois, so Uncle James describes things to me so I can..." he couldn't imagine them; the visual images inside his head were as nonexistent as the ones outside of his head, "get an understanding of my surroundings and people within them."

There was a brief moment of silence before Michigan suddenly stumbled forward, a tiny hand having grabbed his own and was pulling him forward.

"Illinois?" Michigan asked, taking a guess as to who that was—none of his siblings had hands that small, after all. "What are you doing?"

"I'm going to help you see things!" The small territory chirped, and Michigan couldn't help the smile that spread across his face.

"Thank you, Noi. What are you going to see for me first?" Michigan asked, deciding not to mention to Illinois that the little world had been explained to him a dozen times over and that he could navigate it with little difficulty. Well, aside from the forest. It was too complex, and the ground was so covered in roots and rock that he always tripped on things.

"Over here is Uncle James' house!" Illinois said cheerily through his lisp, seemingly forgetting that Michigan could not see whatever he was pointing at. Michigan decided not to mention it so that the young boy could have his fun.

"Really? What does it look like?" Michigan asked.

"It's made of...mud, I think? It has a straw roof and is yellow! Wait, do you know what yellow is?" Illinois asked. Michigan nodded.

"I can see through Dad's eyes, so I got to have colors explained to me," Michigan explained, "And I know yellow is the color of happiness, according to James."

There was a brief moment of silence before Illinois gasped.

"I'm sorry, Mitchigan! I nodded and forgot you couldn't see me. I'm sorry! I didn't mean to!" he said, sounding so panicked. Michigan laughed.

"It's okay, it's okay. I know you didn't mean to," Michigan said before carefully lowering himself to the ground and holding out his arms. "Can I have a hug? I'd do it myself, but I'm not sure how tall you are and don't want to knock you over."

Michigan was then knocked over by a small body barreling into him as tiny arms and wings wrapped around him. Michigan squeezed his little brother tighter, wrapping his wings around the small boy.

He knew his body would become young again when he was born, but right now, Michigan had the body of a teenager, and his large, fully developed (although useless) wings felt like they covered the

small territory.

Eventually, Illinois pulled away, but Michigan could still feel the familiar pinpricks in his neck, which meant that someone was looking at him.

"Before we continue to the tour," Michigan asked, "Can I feel your face? It helps me understand more about what you look like."

"Yes!" Illinois said before grabbing Michigan's hand and putting it in his face. Michigan slowly traced his hand over Illinois' facial features. His nose was small and narrow, and his eyelashes felt long. Michigan moved his hand over to Illinois' ears, wondering how wide his face was. Illinois let out a little giggle.

"That tickles!" he said. Michigan smiled.

"I've been told that it can," Michigan said before putting a hand over Ilinois' mouth as the territory giggled, feeling the smile that was present there. Satisfied, Michigan pulled his hand away.

"Thank you, Illinois."

"You're welcome! I'm glad I can help you see!"

"Yeah, me too."

One Good Leg

Requested by an Anonymous Person on my oneshot request document. I will leave the link in the comments, remind me if I forget.

America hated getting injured in battle, especially as a nation. Maybe it was leftover ideals from his father, but the action had always felt shameful like he had failed in his duties. It made him feel like he had not lived up to the great expectations his people had for him.

This one was worse than most. It was Okinawa. Germany had surrendered and died, and America was getting so close to finally defeating Japan and finishing her off. Like how he had been part of the force to finally defeat Germany, America wanted to be part of the attack force working to defeat Japan.

But instead of defeating Japan, he got shot in the leg and was ordered off the battlefield. He didn't even get shot *on* the battlefield, but by some sniper that he didn't see coming.

America felt ashamed. What was worse was *who* saved him.

"How on earth is that man still alive? I thought...we watched him die, right?" Rebecca asked, sounding slightly panicked.

"No, he ran off before he died. We never actually saw him die, just dissolved his government," Caleb answered.

"Shoulda locked him up in chains and ensured he died," James said, voice uncharacteristically venomous.

America sighed at the argument happening in his head. He was so tired, a sign that the morphine was doing its job, but he wished he was a little more clear-headed so he could focus more on the conversation between his closest friends and family.

"But the part I don't get is why the hell he saved us! There was no one else around; we could have died from infection or exposure, and he got us to a hospital. Why?" Rebecca asked.

"I don't know, but I don't like it. Americ—oh, he's out of it, huh?" James said. America rolled his tired eyes.

"M'fine James. Just tired, and that's not anything new for me." America said without thinking, before feeling fear flood through him. He forgot to check if anyone was around. America blearily lifted his head before lowering it back down to the pillow as he noticed no one else was there.

"Maybe try sleeping. It might help your injury," James suggested, his voice gentle. America groaned.

"I don't want to sleep. I want to get back there and help," he protested.

"You were shot in the leg, Mae. You ain't going nowhere for a long time." Caleb said. America sighed, letting his heavy eyes slide close. He wasn't asleep, and he was still the one in charge, but his mind drifted from worries about the liberation of the Philippines and Kentucky's health to the politics of rebuilding Europe.

And as much as he tried to keep from thinking about it, the memories of the battle and his injury came surging back as America reviewed the events in his mind and tried to think of how he could do better...and why he was saved.

The battle had been bloody, like all the island battles, and America was not so foolish to think he was invincible, especially with a giant red, white, and blue target on his face.

He had only left to go to the bathroom, then...

America had just finished using the bathroom and was making his way back to the camp when a gunshot rang out. Pain exploded in his leg, and America collapsed, injured leg unable to hold his weight anymore. He was sobbing from the pain as blood poured from his leg.

James and Rebecca were yelling as America looked for a sniper and

looked for the soldier who had shot him. Was it a normal soldier? Was it Japan herself, come to kill him?

But no one came, and now more shots were fired.

James was yelling at him, yelling for him to patch up the injury, but some part of America lay there dazed until he felt his arms moving without his command and knew that James had gotten tired of yelling and had moved on to actually doing something.

But there wasn't much they could do.

"Do you think we'll bleed out?" America whispered. He wasn't sure who was in control anymore, the lines between him and James blurring. James hummed as he continued trying his best to stop the bleeding. They had only meant to use the bathroom and had not brought medical supplies.

They needed a medic–fast.

"MEDIC!" America yelled at the top of his lungs, feeling James startle at the unexpected shout.

"Jesus! Warning next time, Maverick!" he exclaimed.

"HELP! I'VE BEEN SHOT!" America yelled, throwing aside all sense of pride. He didn't know if he had been shot by a countryperson or not, and he was not going to run the risk of dying out here, so close to the end of the war, before he even got to see his children again, see Kentucky again.

He could hear Rebecca trying to comfort Unorganized Territory, and America was about to open his mouth to say something to comfort her when he heard footsteps. He turned his head to see another American soldier there—one that looked vaguely familiar.

America's eyebrows scrunched up in confusion as he tried to remember where he had seen the soldier before. The face was basic and forgettable, although slightly feminine, and he had brown eyes and dark brown hair. Any standard American could look like him.

"I need help getting back to camp. I can't walk," America told the soldier,

who was staring at him and hadn't moved. Was he just shocked by the fact that he had found the United States injured? The soldier then broke out of whatever trance he was in and nodded, a strange smile on his face.

"Never thought I'd see the day you came to me asking for help," he said. The voice wasn't familiar, and the accent was Southern, although America couldn't place from where. He blamed the throbbing, pulsing pain in his leg.

"Yeah, it's uncommon to see your nation ask for help. Now I need to get a medic, so help me out here," America snapped, patience growing thin.

"I wouldn't say that's the reason why, Union," the soldier said, causing America's head to snap up as he looked back at the soldier—

America shoved the memory aside. He didn't want to think about that. It brought back far too many memories of that war that he had been trying to push aside.

"Go to sleep, America. We can deal with that tomorrow," James whispered.

"I don't wanna deal with it at all," America complained, feeling far too much like a little kid again. He just wanted things to be over, for everyone to be okay.

Why couldn't he have that?

"I'll take care of it, America. Just get some rest. You deserve it," James reassured. America nodded, giving in to the drugs and slipping away into unconsciousness.

The Crumbling Precipice

This is part two of a collab with ApeculiarChild2. We accidentally started writing two halves of a whole story so we made it into a proper collab. Go check out her oneshot book for part one of the Collab, link in the comments (if I don't forget). S he's a super awesome writer and person!

British Western Pacific Territories woke slowly. His body ached, and sharp pains laced his chest. Everything hurt. There was a dull, throbbing pain in his chest, and his mouth hurt. So did breathing, as each breath caused a tightness in his chest, a small, strange whistle sounding every time he exhaled.

Was this Hell? Has he really been doomed to eternal suffering like his Grandfather said he would? It couldn't be Heaven; everything hurt too much for it to be Heaven. His chest felt like it was on fire, every breath sending a stabbing pain through his chest.

His right hand was in agony, sharp spikes of pain traveling up his arm and bringing tears to his eyes. His face ached, especially his nose and mouth, a dull, throbbing pain that made it hard to think.

Everything hurt.

As his awareness began to grow past the throbbing pain that covered his body, he began to hear faint voices coming from above him, and Pacific cracked his eyes open, hissing at the pain of the lights and shutting his eyes again.

"Pacific?" he heard Uncle Scotland's familiar voice say, the thick accent laced with concern.

A small part of him was disappointed to still be alive. The rest of him was glad that the rest of his *real* family didn't have to see him die.

Pacific opened his eyes again, seeing his uncle's worried face and Solomon Islands above him. He tried to smile, but it quickly faded due to the pain it caused—a stabbing feeling in his nose and upper jaw. Uncle Scotland turned to Solomon Islands.

"Solomon, go get his mother," he said. Solomon Islands nodded and ran off. Uncle Scotland then placed a hand on his forehead. "Do you know where you are?"

Uncle Scotland's voice was gentle and quiet, soothing. Pacific was tired. He shut his eyes and began drifting off, feeling the pain fade as he drifted into the black nothingness, but his focus returned as Uncle Scotland gently tapped his forehead.

"Can you answer me, Pacific?" he asked. Pacific slowly opened his eyes, staring up at his uncle through blurry vision, and tried to nod, but his head barely moved. It hurt too badly to move it any further.

"H'spi'al," he said. His voice sounded weird, the strange whistle in his breath very obvious in his voice. What was that? Uncle Scotland nodded, his face relieved.

"Good," he said, his voice emotional, "I don't think ye have a concussion."

"Ev'ryt'ing hur's," Pacific said, blinking sluggishly. Uncle Scotland's relieved expression faded to concern as he brushed a gentle thumb over Pacific's forehead.

"I know," he said, voice soft, "I send A' Chuimrigh to get some morphine from a hospital. I think he's having trouble convincing them to give us some, but we burned through all our supply yesterday, and that wasn't very big to begin with."

"Yes'erday?" Pacific asked, worried. How long had he been unconscious for? Did Britain really listen and decide not to finish him off? Uncle Scotland nodded.

"You've been unconscious for three days, lad. Your mother's been inconsolable since I pulled Britain off you. She's been sitting by your bed the entire time, but she had to get some rest. Tonga got

Fiji to got to sleep a few hours ago," Uncle Scotland said.

Pacific opened his mouth a little to ask another question until the door slammed open, and his mother ran in, rushing over to his bedside and grabbing his left hand, the hand that didn't feel broken and twisted and wrong.

"O, my baby, my baby, thank goodness you're alive," Mother said, pressing a gentle kiss to his forehead. Pacific felt so much like a little boy again that he couldn't help but cry, the achy pain becoming more real and solid.

"Mommy? It hur's," Pacific said, tears coming to his eyes, which only served to make his face and mouth hurt more. "It hur's!"

"I know, I know, I'm so sorry," Mother said, squeezing his good hand gently. "Britain's not allowed to touch you anymore, okay? Uncle Scotland's banned him from the room and got a few hits in for you."

"M'surry," Pacific said. Uncle Scotland was going to get in trouble for him. No one could tell Britain what to do and not escape unscathed.

"Oh, my baby, you have nothing to apologize for. It's not your fault. The other person to blame is Britain. Don't beat yourself up over everything. Just focus on resting and healing," Mother said before turning to Scotland.

"Are you sure we shouldn't get him to a real doctor?" she asked Uncle Scotland as Pacific shut his eyes again, slowly drifting off again.

"We're lucky enough that Britain's decided to listen to me, but I don't want to risk Pacific's life by taking him to a hospital. Britain made it clear enough that we save his life here, or not at all, you know that, Fìdi. 'Sides, you heard him. He's in enough pain without us moving him," Uncle Scotland said, his voice firm but not unkind.

Someone began running their hand through Pacific's hair, and he leaned into the touch, finding it soothing.

"Someone's gonna find out. Britain can't hide it forever," Mother said. Uncle Scotland let out a bitter laugh.

"Orcadians just told me about the latest news back in Britain. That a colony of Britain's was beaten by the Japanese when he was under occupation and lost a tooth." Uncle Scotland started. Lost a tooth? Pacific slowly lifted his tongue towards the roof of his mouth before pressing it against his teeth, realizing that his front tooth was indeed missing.

Pacific wanted to cry, but he just felt too tired, too lethargic. Of course, Britain deformed him again. It wasn't enough to have that man's flag plastered on his face, but he had to knock out a tooth, too.

Pacific hated her, but Japan was right. It was better to cover up his face and hide what Britain had done to him. He hated it, but she was right.

"Britain's already covered things up. I...you shouldn't stir the pot, not until you're independent," Uncle Scotland then warned, not noticing Pacific's mini-crisis.

"Well, who knows when that'll b—" Mother began before Pacific cut her off, slowly cracking open his eyes again, revealing that it was Solomon Islands running a hand through his hair, worried eyes darting between Uncle Scotland and Mother.

"Met 'Merica. W'en in H'wai. He...he said I co'ld live with him if Brit'in if he bec'me...too much," Pacific explained. Solomon Islands nodded.

"He said that Canton and Enderbury knew where his house here was and that if we needed to get away, we could go with him," Solomon Islands nodded. Mother looked relieved, and Uncle Scotland shook his head slightly with a slight smile on his face.

"Bless that boy," he muttered.

"We should send him there now before Britain changes his mind," Mother said. Solomon Islands immediately sat up, anger on his face.

"We can't do that now! He broke three ribs! His right hand has had almost every bone broken, and that wrist is messed up! He's lost a tooth, and his nose is broken, and he's only been healing for three days! There's no way we can move him until he's better healed," Solomon Islands said, looking on the verge of tears, "He almost died. He...we shouldn't. I'll..I'll fight Fath–Father myself to keep Pacific safe."

"Easy, na h-Eileanan Sholaimh, you...you saw what happened the last time. No one else is getting hurt. But at the same time, Fìdi, Sholaimh's right. Pacific needs time to rest before he can be moved. I'll keep Britain away from him until then," Uncle Scotladn said, a dark look entering his eyes.

Strangely, it didn't scare Pacific. He knew his uncle was not going to be a threat to him. He knew he was safe with Uncle Scotland. His eyes fluttered shut again.

"I 'gree w'th Unca Scot. H'rt too much," Pacific said. A hand returned to his hair, and his mother's gentle voice washed over him.

"I know, baby, I know. I just want to make sure you're safe. I've never been more scared before than watching *him* do that to you. I'm sorry I couldn't do more," Mother said. Pacific cracked open his eyes once more.

"N't your fault. You a good Tinaqu," he said, his falling shut once more.

"Vinaka, Pacific. Are you tired?" Pacific hummed in agreement, and he heard his mother let out a gentle laugh, "Then sleep some more. I'll be here when you wake."

With his mother's approval, Pacific sunk back into the blackness, letting his pain fade away.

ASEAN Nonsense

ASEAN meeting, requested by UshankaCat .

"How have we gotten to this so quickly?" ASEAN asked, pinching the bridge of his nose.

"Hey, you were the one who gave us thirty minutes to gossip. This is not on us," Philippines said, breaking off from his conversation with Singapore, Papua New Guinea, Brunei, and Malaysia about how much they hated Britain or something along those lines. He was pretty sure Britain had been mentioned.

It was a surprise Myanmar hadn't joined them, but he seemed content to stare out the window and ignore them.

"That was not an invitation to start gossiping," ASEAN said, feeling so very tired.

"You lock us in a meeting room all day and expect us not to start gossiping," ASEAN's mother, Thailand, asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Would you rather I beat up Indonesia again? Because we can do that if you'd like," East Timor offered unhelpfully, even though he was supposed to be an observer state.

"No beating people up. Timor, I know you and Indonesia have your differences—"

"He tortured me!"

"I did not!" Indonesia snapped, turning to stare down the smaller country, who simply shot him a rude gesture.

"Please. Stop this. You, except for Cambodia, are all much older than me. You should know that this is an important meeting, and we need to pay attention to it," ASEAN finished, shooting his member states with a tired smile.

"We will," Brunei said with a dismissive wave of her hand, "After I finish catching everyone up on the fact that I heard from Commonwealth, who heard from Scotland, that Britain has started therapy."

ASEAN blinked. Britain getting therapy. Miracles could happen.

"Huh. Never thought I would see that day. Continue then, but make it short. The sooner we finish, the sooner we can go home," ASEAN said. Laos laughed.

"Tired of us already?" he asked.

"I'm tired of you all the time," ASEAN said.

"Then you are truly one of us," Vietnam joked. ASEAN almost asked her who she was tired of but stopped, realizing it was a stupid question.

"We're all constantly tired. Let us joke a little, pretend to be human," Singapore said, "We don't get very much time to do that."

"Because God forbid we be treated like people," Papua New Guinea, ASEAN's other observer state, muttered. ASEAN felt a sliver of guilt in his stomach, very familiar with that feeling. They all experienced some sort of discrimination due to their species. For some, it was worse. For others, it was better.

ASEAN was very familiar with it. He was the organization, the political being that could feel nothing.

"Sorry. I'm just...stressed." ASEAN said, relaxing. His mother patted his arm, smiling softly.

"We know. You put too much on yourself. We have learned that sometimes, it is better to take breaks," Thailand said. ASEAN smiled.

"Thank you, mâae," he said.

"Besides, you can't say you don't want to get involved in one of the world's favorite hobbies—gossiping about Britain," Malaysia said.

ASEAN rolled his eyes.

"Please, I know you do more than just gossip. And Myanmar hasn't joined you, so clearly, it's not everyone's favorite," ASEAN argued.

"Leave me out of this!" Myanmar called, turning away from the window for the first time.

"Well, you heard the man. Myanmar wants to leave ASEAN. Cast your votes now to get Mr. Grumpy to leave," Cambodia said. ASEAN let his head fall to the table.

He didn't care what people said.

He was skipping the next meeting.

The Little Empire's Crush

Requested by UshankaCat

He didn't have a name—not a country one. His father called him a "waste of space" and an "imposter," and his tad ignored him and pretended like he wasn't there. The former Colony of Santiago, now known as Jamaica, his father's new colony, had tried his best to fix that, but without knowing who he really was or what he was supposed to be, it didn't work out.

He thanked Jamacia anyway.

So, he preferred to go by his human name, William Fitzroy. His surname meant "son of the king," and it was William's attempt to garner support from his father. It was typically bestowed to bastard children, and William knew that well.

Even though he had a human name, he sometimes thought his father only knew of him as "the bastard."

It hurt.

But he has his ways of escaping (not that he was too welcome in his father's home or the palace).

The theater had always been his escape, a way to escape how terrible and horrific the real world was. It was a place where he could forget about the fact that he was a bastard and just indulge in something he loved, something that was there for him more than either of his parents were.

William had seen his particular performance many a time before. He came back, not for the story, but for the lead actor. The actor was talented and graceful, everything William wanted to be someday. His hair was golden, and his eyes a glimmering blue and —

William cut off his thoughts as he realized the path his thoughts were going down. No. Not again. Those sinful thoughts couldn't be back again.

He couldn't. He...he couldn't. He needed his father to love him. He needed to prove that he was good. He couldn't think like that. He couldn't indulge in sin.

William's hands felt clammy as he tried his best to focus on the rest of the performance. But it was hard when he had to avoid looking at the lead actor, the one who would tempt him into sin.

But William was a Holy Angel, a descendent of the Kingdom of England and the Principality of Wales. He was supposed to be Holy and pure, one of God's ambassadors to Earth. If he was tempted into sin, what would that say about the state of humanity, the state of his father's country?

William couldn't be tempted. He wouldn't.

When the performance was over, instead of going backstage to talk to the cast like he usually did, William was quick to leave, fleeing back home, trying to outpace his own thoughts.

This had to be a test, right?

God had to be testing him, doing something to prove to William's father that he was an angel like him, that he was supposed to be on earth, that he was good and Holy and just as pure as his father.

William broke off from his quick pace back home, instead searching for the nearest church. He needed to pray, to prove that he was not tempted, to prove that he was *good.*

Upon his arrival at the church, grateful to see that it was relatively empty, William hurried to sit in the back corner so no one could overhear him.

"Lord, please, I have not been tempted into sin. I have passed all the tests that you have given me and proven my worth as one of your angels. God, I beg of you now; please convey that to my father.

Please show to him that I am not a sinful creature, a bastard, but a being such as him. Please help me show him that I am good," William prayed, hands clasped tightly in prayer.

He was good. He didn't give in to sin.

His father had to see that.

Bonds & Bruises

Éire was upset but not surprised to learn that Aontas na Corónach wanted to kill the New England Confederation. She had pushed and pushed against his power before, challenging him in a way few of the colonies chose to do. It was all in the name of her people, a feeling Éire knew well, but Aontas na Corónach refused to accept that.

He never accepted anything that challenged him.

And, of course, Éire got the blame for it. Aontas na Corónach was so unfathomably stuck in his mindset of being a flawless parent and empire that the idea that he could have driven his own granddaughter against him was unthinkable to him that he needed someone to blame.

And just like his grandfather before him, Aontas na Corónach found that blaming Éire was the best solution to all his problems.

"What did you do to my granddaughter?" Aontas na Corónach asked as he shoved Éire into his room (a generous term, if Éire was being honest with himself). His eyes were wild and angry, and if Éire weren't concerned with preserving his life for his people, he would have commented on the madness in Aontas na Corónach's eyes.

"I did nothing to her. I have barely spoken to her," Éire said. Aontas na Corónach gritted his teeth, flaming anger in his eyes, and Éire knew that if he had lion features like his grandfather, he would be growling at Éire. The chains of their bond that were always so present on Éire began to grow more and more real, turning from the light pressure of shackles on his wrists to the feeling of real shackles, cool metal on his wrists.

Aontas na Corónach was furious now because it wasn't just those shackles becoming more real, but the feeling of new chains appearing, wrapping around his ankles and neck, slowly drawing

tighter.

Aontas na Corónach clicked his tongue before he made a movement with his hand, like he was pulling something towards him, and Éire felt the chains around his neck tighten as he was pulled towards Aontas na Corónach, a sharp jerk on his neck that briefly stole the air from his lungs. He tried to fight them, but the chains felt heavy, and he could begin to feel Aontas na Corónach's influence tugging at the corners of his mind, slowly pushing everything away.

"Cut it out," Éire said, head growing fuzzy from the foreign presence. Aontas na Corónach's control left his mind, but the heavy, ever-tightening chains had already brought him to his knees.

"I'm not doing anything," Aontas na Corónach said, his voice full of fake ignorance, pretending as if he didn't know what he was doing. Éire lifted his head, glaring up at the man who had made all of his pain worse.

"I didn't say anything," Éire protested before biting down a hiss of pain as the chains seemed to become sharper, cutting into his skin. It was so overwhelmingly strong that he almost forgot that it wasn't real, just a feeling that manifested their relationship—Éire's role as Aontas na Corónach's little colony.

"She wouldn't have turned against me otherwise," Aontas na Corónach said. Éire laughed.

"You have far too much faith in me. All of them think I am savage because of what you have said about me. Do you think they will believe a savage over you, the great Aontas na Corónach?" he asked before his breath was stolen from him and the shackle on his neck tightened some more. For something that wasn't real, it was so painfully present.

"Playing dumb will not help you. As a colony, you are more intelligent than most of the savages that belong to you, and my grandaughter's new behavior bears all the markings that your sinful drivel has corrupted her soul," Aontas na Corónach said.

Éire wasn't focusing on the empire's words anymore, so preoccupied

with the lack of air entering his lungs, falling onto his side as his fingers scratched against his neck, trying to pull off chains that didn't exist.

Black spots began to dance in his vision, and Éire bit down a sob. He hated showing weakness in front of Aontas na Corónach, as the man would seize the opportunity, attacking it again and again until he had worn you down into a blank slate for him to build back up in his image.

Éire would die before giving up who he was for Aontas na Corónach and Sasana.

No matter how hard the bond squeezed at him, forever reminding him that he had lost his nationhood and had become tied to them, forever reminding him that society expected his role to be a submissive, docile, and obedient follower who did everything that Aontas na Corónach requested of him.

Éire didn't give a damn what society expected of him.

The chains around his next loosened, and Éire sucked in a breath, grateful for the air that flooded his lungs, blinking some tears out of his eyes.

Aontas na Corónach must have realized what was happening and pulled back. No one knew if pain inflicted through the bond could kill, as Aontas na Corónach's was a unique kind of bond. Sasana's had been different. It wasn't chains that constricted his movement and breathing, even if it had still been controlling.

It was more like water, cold and dark and deep, that made you feel like you were drowning in the darkness if you did something he didn't like. But even that feeling of drowning hadn't stolen his breath the way Aontas na Corónach's bond did because it was always a feeling, always something that wasn't physical, just an ocean in which England captained the only ship, and if you weren't on board, you were left to swim.

Sasana's could feel nice sometimes as well; on the rare occasions they were on speaking terms, when the bond pulled Éire out of the

water and had him beside him on the ship.

Diúcacht na Normainne's bond had also felt different. Like Sasana's, it was like water, but less a ship and the dark ocean and more a violent current that surrounded you and pulled you under.

Éire wasn't sure how Diúcacht na Normainne's felt when you were on good terms, as he had never been close enough to that woman to know. She didn't get along with most people, though, only Sasana, who would have followed her into Hell itself.

Sometimes, Éire wondered if Sasana was being pulled under by that current as well.

Éire hated both bonds then, but now, after experiencing Aontas na Corónach's bond, he wished for it back. Sasana's hurt hurt him, but it still allowed him to be a person and gave him some degree of autonomy.

Aontas na Corónach's bond seemed intent on having absolute control over everyone it connected him with.

Éire hated it more than anything.

A Concerned Friend

A little sneak peek into a book I hope to write on England and the Norman invasion.

Alba had been worried about Sasann. Ever since Nòrmandaidh had invaded his country, none of his neighbors had seen him, only heard rumors of what the conquering nation was doing in an attempt to solidify control.

It was concerning, to say the least. Alba worried about what had happened to Sasann and whether the other country was okay. He and Sasann may not have been the closest, but that gave him no reason not to be concerned.

So when he received an invitation to visit Sasann's new capital, London, and see the man again, Alba jumped at the opportunity. He was eager to check in on his friend and confirm any rumors he had heard.

Things felt different; he noticed that as soon as he entered the city. Maybe it was the new capital, or perhaps it was the people now in charge, but something felt off about this new city.

Alba was anxious.

When he was led into the palace, he was annoyed to find that none of the guards meant to lead him into the throne room spoke Englisċ. Alba didn't speak Nòrmandaidh's language, only truly knowing the languages of his neighbors, something he was beginning to realize was a problem.

Nòrmandaidh was his neighbor now. He would have to learn her language now. Alba merely sighed and added it to a mental list as they approached what he presumed to be the throne room in this new palace.

The sight he saw when entering the room was not what he

expected. Sasann was not in any place of honor like a countryhuman usually was; rather, he was sitting on the ground beside the throne Nòrmandaidh was on, head bowed.

His wings were gone. Alba had known that, but seeing it was another thing.

Sasann looked so different. He used to be a dragon, full of fire and fight, but now that was gone. His dragon features were gone, the most noticeable piece of his heritage. Replacing them now was a set of lion ears and a tail to match, his flag a faded version of Nòrmandaidh's.

He looked far too much like her and far too little like the person Alba knew. He hated it.

He seemed too...docile to be the man he knew. That only served to worry Alba further. How had Nòrmandaidh gotten him into this state? How did she win—or force, most likely—the most stubborn man Alba had ever met into kneeling by her side like a servant or slave?

As far as Alba could see, no chains or restraints bound the man to the ground. He kneeled of his own free will—a sign of humiliation and defeat that Alba had never imagined from Sasann.

It might have been a bit offensive, considering the message Nòrmandaidh was clearly trying to send about who was in power, but Alba ignored her, instead facing Sasann. He needed to talk to the man, to see if he was okay, to try to piece together the terrifying picture in front of him.

"It's good to see you again, Sasann. I hope you're well," Alba said. Sasann lifted his head; a tiny spark of the cheerful boy he once knew lit up in Sasann's eye as he lifted his head, opening his mouth to respond. But before he could say anything, Nòrmandaidh placed her hand on top of his head, and Sasann's spark went out as his eyes fogged over, head falling as Nòrmandaidh pushed it back down into its bowed position.

Alba felt sick.

"Scoteland, I know that my son was once the countryhuman of this land, but I am in charge now, and you will do well to remember that," Nòrmandaidh said, surprising Alba with her Englisċ (accented as it was), but also her words. Son? What kind of delusion was this? Alba had known Sasann since the country's birth, and he had never had a mother.

What was Nòrmandaidh doing?

Alba looked back at Sasann, so still and empty compared to who he used to be. The idea that Nòrmandaidh was able to get him into this state was terrifying. Sasann was stubborn, and he would not have been broken easily.

He would have to find A' Chòrn and see if she knew anything. Whatever Nòrmandaidh had done...it didn't seem good. Cutting off his wings was terrible enough, but Sasann looked as if he had been drained of everything. Maybe he had.

"Does that mean I cannot say hello to a friend I have not seen in a long while?" Alba asked, lifting his head to make eye contact with Nòrmandaidh. She smiled, revealing a mouth of fangs, the hand petting the lion ears on Sasann's head.

Alba was not the one being treated like a glorified pet, and yet he couldn't help but be angry on Sasann's behalf. How dare she treat another of their kind that way. Nòrmandaidh was the ruling party now, yes, but Sasann was still a countryhuman, and he deserved to be treated like one—not like this, not like some little pet or prize that belonged to Nòrmandaidh.

"It's not appropriate to ignore your hosting nation in favor of...a child nation who is still learning how the world works," Nòrmandaidh said.

Child nation? Sasann was well over a hundred, Alba would know. He had been dealing with the man for a long while, but to insult him in that way, to imply that his decades of life meant nothing? Or was this part of Nòrmandaidh's delusional claim that Sasann was her child, something that was clearly being done in an attempt to justify what she was doing?

Alba couldn't say he was fond of Nòrmandaidh.

"Sasann is no child. I believe he is close to the same age as you. And he is no ignorant man; he has seen war and plague, and I can vouch, just as anyone else, that he is a mature and..." Alba paused, thinking of another word to describe Sasann, something that captured the essence of who he was, the essence that seemed so drained out of him now. "And fiery man."

There was a dangerous, annoyed look in Nòrmandaidh's eyes, but Alba did not let that deter him, choosing instead to look her in the eye, daring her to challenge him.

"Let us continue this discussion outside, shall we?" Nòrmandaidh asked, her claws tangling in Sasann's hair. Alba looked back at Sasann, whose head had lifted some with Alba's words. His eyes still seemed foggy and confused, and Alba shuddered to think of what Nòrmandaidh had done to dampen the light from them.

It was clear to Alba that this was being done in an effort to get Alba away from Sasann, a sign that Nòrmandaidh's control was not as total as she wanted people to think. It was an interesting discovery. That, combined with the tiny spark of life that had been in Sasann's eyes when Alba entered, gave him hope that buried deep behind...this humiliating display, the man he knew was still in there.

"Why should we? I know that you are not the ruling nation, but Sasann is still here, so he should be able to join our discussion?" Alba asked, trying to get an understanding of her temper, of how far she was willing to push.

"Engleterre doesn't want to join us, isn't that right, my son? You don't want to join us?" Nòrmandaidh asked, a mocking glint in her eye. Sasann remained silent, and Nòrmandaidh's grin widened before she said something in her language.

Sasann answered, whispered words in a foreign tongue. Alba hated it. Sasann couldn't have forgotten his own language, but it was clear that he was scared—or reluctant, at least, to acknowledge his native language.

Once again, Alba was left asking why. Why was Sasann behaving this way? What had Nòrmandaidh done to him? Why had this happened?

"You see, Scoteland? My son is okay with it," Nòrmandaidh said, her tone so mocking as it danced over the words "my son," and Alba could only imagine what Sasann's father would have thought of the display.

How had A' Chòrn let this happen? She was Sasann's beloved antaidh; surely she would be here for him.

Unless, of course, Nòrmandaidh had done something to her to keep her away from Sasann so Nòrmandaidh could humiliate him, maim him, treat him like a pet.

Nòrmandaidh was still petting Sasann's ears.

"Fine," Alba begrudgingly agreed, not wanting to leave Sasann behind. But it was clear Nòrmandaidh would push this until she got what she wanted. And maybe, just maybe she would be more open about what she did to Sasann when they were alone.

As they exited the room, Nòrmandaidh turned to a guard, barking orders in her native tongue. The guard walked over to Sasann and pulled the nation to his feet.

Sasann didn't resist. His head remained bowed. He seemed so...empty. Where had his fire gone?

Anger burned in Alba's chest, and he did his best to bite his tongue, not wanting to risk making anything worse for Sasann. He didn't know what Nòrmandaidh was doing to him, but Alba was not going to make it worse, not when he still needed to talk to Sasann and A' Chòrn and figure out what had happened.

Even if he couldn't do anything, Alba wanted to be aware of what Nòrmandaidh's ambitions and methods were, for if she came for him, Alba did not want to be broken by her.

He refused to end up like Sasann, as sympathetic as he was towards the poor man. Alba did not want to end up kneeling on the floor

beside the woman who conquered him as she treated him like a pet.

Alba would never let that happen to him.

"If I ask what you did to Sasann, would you answer truthfully?" Alba asked. Nòrmandaidh smiled.

"I did nothing to him. He has decided himself that this is his place in the world. All I have given him is a new home and family," she insisted, something mocking in her voice as she said so.

"A' Chòrn is his family. Where is she now?" Alba asked. Nòrmandaidh tilted her head.

"Who is that?" she asked. Alba kept his mouth shut. Whatever Nòrmandaidh did to Sasann, Alba was not going to be responsible for him doing the same to A' Chòrn.

"If you don't know, clearly you don't know Sasann as well as you claim to," Alba said. Nòrmandaidh scowled, a growl building in her throat.

"I have made my son a better person, a better personification. I know him better than anyone, alive or dead. You do not live with him as I do, and therefore, you cannot claim to know him or what is best for him," Nòrmandaidh said.

"You cut off his wings. You cannot claim to be helping him when you took away something he always held so dear. Nothing made that man happier than that," Alba said, careful to keep his voice even as he turned his back to Nòrmandaidh, slowly walking away and making her follow him.

"I am *helping* him. And I did not cut off his wings. That happened as a result of the battle in which he tried to resist by aid," Nòrmandaidh said. Alba scoffed. Did Nòrmandaidh really believe what she said, or did she just say this in an attempt to buy Alba's loyalty, to pull his support from Sasann?

"Why is all this about you? You never mention Sasann or his wishes, just what *you* are doing," Alba said.

"My son knows I am helping him, and he has been very eager to improve, to be better. If you insist that he is better off in the unhappy state he was in when I took him in, then you are not someone my son should be around," Nòrmandaidh snapped, her voice a low, angry growl.

"The Sasann I knew was happy, even if you refuse to see that!" Alba snapped, angry. How could she do this to someone and call it right, call it just? How could she do that?

"Scoteland, I recommend you leave our country now before you get into more trouble," Nòrmandaidh said.

"And if I don't?" Alba challenged. Nòrmandaidh smirked.

"You care for *my* son, don't you? Don't you want him to be safe and free from harmful influences?" she asked.

It wasn't a direct threat, but it was well-implied. If Alba stayed, if he continued to push things, Nòrmandaidh would make things worse for Sasann.

Alba hated it, but he would have to leave. He couldn't make things worse.

"Fine," Alba said unhappily, "But I will stay aware of what is happening with Sasann. I still care for him, you know?"

Nòrmandaidh's grin was wild and dangerous.

"Of course, Alba. I look forward to our next meeting."

Glancing back to the door that led into the room Sasann was once in, Alba sighed, taking himself back to his home.

He couldn't do anything now. Hopefully, with time, he could help Sasann.

Hopefully.

The Murder of a Kingdom

TW: Blood and Murder. It's kinda graphic.

When Norddmandi asked to meet with him, Gwynedd was skeptical. Norddmandi, the conqueror of Lloegr and the murderer of the Kingdoms of Iwerddon, was well known in the Ynysoedd Prydain for her being ruthless and cruel, someone who cared only for her own wants and desires.

Gwynedd believed it. He had spoken with her many times before, and it was always unpleasant.

Unfortunately, Gwynedd was a countryhuman, and therefore, he had to meet with other countryhumans when they asked. However, he didn't trust Norddmandi not to stab him in the back, so Gwynedd picked a small stone hut he owned as a meeting place, where Norddmandi wouldn't try any funny business with his rulers.

He tried to be professional when Norddmandi arrived to talk with him.

"I have heard about this new principality you are trying to make?" she asked. Gwynedd sighed.

"Norddmandi, you have been informed of these plans because they will put us in a similar position to what Alban is now. Why do you need to check this?" Gwynedd asked, suspicious of her intentions.

"I just want to talk about what you plan to do after. Are you going to live with me and Engleterre?" Norddmandi asked. Gwynedd really hates talking with this woman.

"No, I will stay in my own home but visit once or twice a year," he explained, uneasy. Something about the way Norddmandi was holding herself set off over seven hundred years of hard-won instincts within Gwynedd's brain.

Even though he suspected it before, he was sure now that Norddmandi was up to something.

"How nice. And what about Engleterre? What are your plans for him?" Norddmandi asked. Gwynedd snorted.

"I'm not becoming a principality to try and control Lloegr. Relax. If anything, I will simply rekindle our former friendship to ensure peaceful relations," Gwynedd explained, tensing as Norddmandi's eyes narrowed.

"Meaning?" she asked. Gwynedd shrugged, trying his best to look nonchalant, even as his fire built up in his throat, making it hard to breathe normally.

"I just want to be friends. After all, I have known him for longer than you, and I am much older than you both. I have plenty of wisdom and advice to pass down, and I would be happy to do so. I remember years ago when Lloegr would come over to my capital, and we discussed trade and then would get off topic, and I would tell him stories of the kingdoms before him—the ones I knew in any case, and then, especially when he was younger, I would help him with his flight." Gwynedd explained, smiling as he remembered the many weeks spent teaching Lloegr to fly. It was the reason for his first official visit to Winchester, as Lloegr's government wanted him to know how, and Lloegr certainly took to it like a duck to water.

What Norddmandi did to his wings was unforgivable. Gwynedd couldn't imagine the kind of torture going through losing them and then having to be without them was. He shuddered at the very thought of it.

"So you're the one who instilled that in him," Norddmandi said, something calculating in her eye. Gwynedd shrugged.

"I was simply the closest dragon countryhuman nearby to help," Gwynedd said. Norddmandi nodded before smiling

"Thank you, Gwynedd. You have made this choice much easier."

Norddmandi suddenly lept at him, teeth bared. The noise that

escaped Gwynedd at that moment was far from human, but one that showed his surprise. Norddmandi knocked him to the ground, stunning him as her claws ripped at his chest, cutting part of his clothes and flesh into bloody ribbons as his teeth snapped at his throat.

Growling, Gwynedd did his best to hold her head away from his neck, wishing at that moment that he had been blessed with claws like so many other nations with lion or dragon features. But, unlike Norddmandi, he was fireproof, and he let that flame that had been building in his throat free, burning Norddmandi's face as she screamed, falling off him.

Gwynedd was quick to regain his footing, not wanting to lose the advantage as he moved towards Norddmandi, whose hands were covering the left side of her face, brutally burned.

"You have one chance to leave my lands and never return, or I will kill you. I suggest you take the offer. After all, you have a *son* to get back to, don't you? Then again, you aren't really his mother, so I think he would be okay if I were to strike you down now." Gwynedd snarled, growling as fire dripped past his lips. His chest ached, and he hadn't wanted to look at the damage, but he already knew it was going to scar.

Norddmandi's head shot back up, madness and rage in her eyes as she returned Gwynedd's challenge with an inhumane snarl of her own. It was clear to Gwynedd that this was not a battle that would be fought like men, but rather tooth and nail and claw until one of them was dead on the floor.

Gwynedd refused to let it be him. He had to kill her, to put a stop to the murderous rampage she had cut across their isles, to get revenge for all those who were dead because of her. And for the little dragon he had once known, the dragon that was so twisted from the boy he once knew. The little boy Norddmandi twisted into her slave and son.

With a loud noise of anger, Norddmandi lept at Gwynedd again, claws dripping with his blood. Knowing this was a fight for his very life, Gwynedd did not pay attention to the furniture and trappings

in the room, willing to destroy however much of it was needed to defeat his foe.

Catching Norddmandi and throwing her to the side, ignoring how her claws ripped across his arms, tearing through skin and flesh, he was quick to let the flames that were eagerly building in his throw and mouth free as they danced around his face. It was risky and he usually would never do this, not eager to lose his hair or his clothes, but sacrifices needed to be made in favor of keeping his life.

Unfortunately, even though he had gotten Norddmandi in the face, only half of it was burnt, and he was bleeding from several wounds. He needed to end this. Now.

Norddmandi lept at him again, and this time, Gwynedd grabbed her right arm between his fangs, biting down as hard as he could, pumping flames into her arm, hearing bone crack and flesh sizzle as Norddmandi clawed at his face and neck over and over again, until the pain from the savage attack forced Gwynedd to let go.

He was bleeding heavily and was lightheaded from the blood loss. His breath was wheezing and came out in short bursts through the abuse that Gwynedd had received as he put a hand to his neck to try and cover the wounds, all out of fire.

The only thing filling his throat now was blood, which Gwynedd was quick to spit out. He always hated the taste of blood.

Norddmandi was on the ground, writhing in pain, her right arm nearly detached from her body at the elbow, where Gwynedd had bitten down. It was an excellent match to the ugly burn scars that wept from the right side of her face.

"Go...home..." Gwynedd gasped out, "I can...get you...a physician. To ensure...you survive if you....wish to travel by land."

Norddmandi glared up at him, hatred in her remaining eye.

"Never," she snarled, and in his injured state, Gwynedd couldn't stop her from jumping up and slashing at his face with her good arm, snarling as her mouth grabbed ahold of his throat, blood bubbling

up as Gwynedd began to choke on his own blood.

His clawless hands scratched at Norddmandi as he desperately fought her off, becoming weaker and weaker, dizzy until her hands dropped to his side, feeling numb and cold.

Norddmandi then released him, and Gwynedd dropped to the floor, blood slowly draining out of his body.

He felt so cold...

His eyes began to flutter shut, but Norddmandi rapped his cheek with her good hand, and Gwynedd forced his eyes open.

His feet were so numb, and tears flowed from his eyes—either pain or grief or sorrow, he didn't know.

"You fought well," Norddmandi said, pain clear in her voice, her own tears streaming down her face. "No one else has defeated me like that."

Gwynedd tried to respond, but all that came out was more blood, spilling past his lips and making his mouth taste of iron.

"I hope this means your *replacement* will be similar. I would be good to have power like that on my side," Norddmandi said. Gwynedd laughed, more blood flying out of his mouth.

"You already...have a...draig, but you've...beaten that out of...him long ago," Gwynedd whispered as his vision grew darker. Everything was numb and cold.

"I will...replacement...useful! I will...son!...you? Hurt..."

Norddmandi's angry voice faded in and out as Gwynedd sank deeper into the darkness.

The pain was fading.

And the land sighed a final breath as the younger nation ranted, fueled by her hatred and rage, until she noticed the still nation in front of her, covered in blood, tears, and ash. Normaundie screamed

in rage before raking her claws over the dead nation's face again and again, as, unbeknownst to her, a newborn nation-child huddled in the back of the room, trembling in fear.

Normaundie then finished her ramage, cursing out the man again before vanishing back to her land, finally realizing the true extent of her injuries.

The nation-child then crept forward to the mutilated man before throwing himself onto the body and sobbing.

Both for the life and father he just lost.

Countrycats

Crack AU writing inspired by NewLostIslands drawing various states as cats. Literally everything is the same as in canon, the personifications are just all cats now. Might write more later but idk, wanted to share this with y'all. Also countries with animal features (for the most, reasonable part) keep them, just so you don't get confused if they are mentioned.

America pulled Delaware closer, grooming the small cat's head as he squirmed in America's grip.

"Da..." he whined, "you're embarrassing me. I was going to go play with York and Jay!"

"You can play once you're clean," America said as Delaware pouted.

"I'm just going to get dirty again, Da!" Delaware pointed out. America just gave him a very pointed lick between the ears before stepping away.

"Fine, go play with them. I need to hunt down a certain fluffball anyways," America said, stalking off to hunt down their tiny brother. Delaware watches his father leave before he is suddenly barrelled over.

"Finally!" New York said from atop Delaware, paws pinning down the smaller cat. Delaware squirmed beneath his littermate as the bigger cat slowly crushed him, wings outstretched.

"You're real proud of yourself, aren't you?" Delaware asked. New York didn't answer; he just clambered off his brother.

"Let's go get Jay now!" he exclaimed.

"No, you aren't!" New Jersey explained, having overheard them, before running in the other direction. New York and Delaware exchanged looks before running after their older brother, quickly

catching up and tacking him, rolling around in the dirt as the three littermates playfought with one another.

"Can you idiots keep your paws off each other for a day? You all act like a bunch of kittens!" their older sister, Maryland, asked, blinking over at them in annoyance, having clearly been woken from her nap.

"Sorry, Mary!" New Jersey called right before being batted across the face by Delaware's paw and immediately forgetting his apology as he headbutted his brother, not wanting to hit him with his tiny hooves.

And despite Maryland's annoyance, the three littermates tussled with each other like kittens for the rest of the afternoon.

The Funky Gender of the Northern Carolina

Request by an Anon on my oneshot request form.

For those unaware, this is not my only oneshot book! I also have one for my British Michigan AU oneshots, and one for my Steven Universe x Countryhumans oneshots. Links in the comments for those interested.

North Carolina has always known she wasn't a girl. She didn't know what she was, but it definitely wasn't female.

His gender was confusing to him. He didn't mind using she/her pronouns, but being called a girl never sat right with him. He liked all pronouns; he didn't mind that, but assigning a specific gender to himself never felt right.

They never told anyone. Even when Australia and South Carolina came out as transgender, North Carolina never told anyone. They never got the courage, too, because if they were going to tell everyone they weren't a girl, then they should know who they are.

So she waited, and she waited, and she waited.

California came out as non-binary, but that label didn't fit North Carolina, so she still stayed silent. When Lousiana came out as genderfluid, North Carolina thought that she had finally figured out the gender that fit her. But that didn't either. Her gender never changed. It was never anything that she could easily label.

So North Carolina waited some more.

He should have realized he wouldn't have been able to hide it from his twin forever.

"Are you trans?" South Carolina sprung on him one day, causing North Carolina to let out a startled laugh.

"What? What makes you think that?" North Carolina asked, unable to stop anxiety from pitching their voice upwards.

"You act really uncomfortable with being called a girl like I was with being called a man. I...it's fine if you aren't, but I noticed that and wanted you to know that you can tell me anything," South Carolina said. North Carolina laughed somewhat nervously and nodded.

"Thanks, little sister, that means a lot," they said.

"Hey! Just cause I'm *South* Carolina doesn't mean I'm younger. Mama and Uncle James said we're the same age and that we were born at the same time when Carolina split!" South Carolina protested, crossing her arms, worry still in her eyes. North Carolina cracked a small grin, hoping that his sister had been distracted enough as not to question her anymore.

He wasn't so lucky.

"Seriously, though, is something bothering you?" South Carolina asked.

"No, I'm fine," North Carolina answered a bit too quickly, based on the raised eyebrow their sister directed their way.

"Are you? I won't tell anyone if you just need someone to talk to about it. I can keep a secret, and Oz will back me on that," South Carolina said. North Carolina said.

"You aren't going to leave me alone about this, are you?" they asked.

"I can leave you alone! But...I just want you to know I'm aware something's up, and I'm willing to talk if you need it," South Carolina said before turning to walk away.

"What if I wasn't a girl? But not a guy or like Cali or Ana? Just...not female, but unsure of what I was. Hypothetically," North Carolina

asked. South Carolina paused before sitting down beside her twin.

"Well, I'd say that's pretty cool. Ask you what you want to be called, and tell you that the word for that is genderqueer," South Carolina said. North Carolina's head snapped over to look at his sister.

"There's a word for that?" he exclaimed before blushing and looking away, realizing he had given up any semblance of a ruse.

"Yeah, there is like queer, but specifically for people who don't know what gender they really are. You don't have to have a word for it to know you aren't a girl. I've known I wasn't a man for years, but I never had words like transgender when I was younger. That never meant I knew it any less," South Carolina said.

"I didn't think...I didn't want people to think I was just confused because I didn't have a word for it. I felt...felt I would need something to validate it before it would be believed," North Carolina explained.

"I do believe you. Do you...do you have a preference for pronouns? Should I not use she/her?" South Carolina asked. NorthCarolina sighed.

"No, she is fine. I'm okay with them all. I just hate being called a woman or girl or sister or anything like that," they explained. South Carolina nodded.

"Understood, Northie. Want to tell the others?" she asked.

"No, not yet. I think...I just...don't feel comfortable enough with it yet," North Carolina said. South Carolina nodded, understanding in her eyes.

"I get that. Thank you for telling me. I'm glad I could help you find a word for yourself. Or at least, one that fits better than most," she said. North Carolina smiled.

"Thank you for that."

"Anything for my favorite sibling."

Sibling. That felt nice.

The Ghosts That Haunt You

Inspired by some beautiful art by just-a-birbo . (Link in comments). If you haven't seen their art, go check out their Tumblr (collar-cat) because they are an amazing artist.

THEY ALSO MADE AN ANIMATIC FOR THIS (link in comments)

And NewLostIslands just made an amazing animatic for this oneshot please go check her out (link in comments)

TW for suicidal thoughts.

Plymouth's new identity had been haunting him for years. Even now, as the sixth state to join his father's country, the name of his dead brother haunted him.

Massachusetts, they called him, the politicians whose hands he shook as they offered to buy him a drink and invited him to their homes, their faces alight with joy at the "birth" of their state.

It made Plymouth feel sick. His throat seized up, and he did his best to smile and nod as he choked back tears.

I'm not Massachusetts! He wanted to scream. *Stop saying I'm him!*

He couldn't. He couldn't, not without making people think his father was mad, that he was mad.

So he bit back sobs and ignored the tears that crept into his vision as the politicians of Massachusetts Bay celebrated the existence of his murderer.

He was grateful when the day ended, when he could excuse himself from the celebration of his body.

"I need to get home," he had said. "My father wants to do something with the whole family."

It wasn't a lie. It still felt like one.

So now here Plymouth was, curled up on the sofa and wishing so desperately that Virginia was here, that she had ratified the Consitution before him, so he didn't have to face this without her.

She had been there since his birth. Plymouth wished she could be with him now.

He felt empty. Even though he had a body now, a chance to live life as himself, he felt as if he had been drained of all life and all will to live. In Father's head, he could at least pretend that Plymouth was still real, that Massachusetts Bay wasn't—wasn't dead, but just somewhere else.

There was no pretending here. There was no Plymouth here—only the life of his dead brother he was expected to take.

Plymouth wished he was dead.

Although...he did have a body of his own now. Would it be better if he just took care of things now so...so Massachusetts Bay's people would have a better personification, a personification that wasn't a murderer? Maybe if he were lucky, it would be Massachusetts Bay's replacement.

Maybe he was standing in the way of things.

Plymouth walked into the kitchen, not feeling in control of his body. The only person in there was Connecticut, sitting on the table. The state grinned, mouth curling into a familiar smile.

"Hello, Massy," he said. Plymouth couldn't stop himself from flinching at the nickname. Connecticut frowned. "Sorry, Plym. I guess this day would be rough on you."

Plymouth didn't say anything. He wasn't sure if he could without sobbing.

"Are you okay? I know the bodies can be overwhelming," Connecticut asked. Plymouth couldn't breathe. He felt like he was going to faint. Everything was too much.

His hands were shaking.

He needed Virginia. He needed his mother, the only person who would understand. He couldn't breathe, he couldn't breathe, *he couldn't breathe.*

"LITTLE BROTHER!"

Plymouth gasped, black spots at the end of his vision as Connecticut's voice snapped him out of whatever fit he had fallen into.

Dimly, he realized he had fallen to the floor.

"Little...little brother?" Plymouth asked, confused. He was sixteen years older than Connecticut. What was he talking about? The confusion eased the pressure on his chest, eased the weight that was crushing his mind.

Connecticut smiled, worry in his eyes.

"Well, since we're supposedly as old as our statehood dates now, that makes me older than you in the eyes of our people," he argued. Plymouth scoffed.

"It's not even thirty days!" He protested, clinging desperately to the topic, eager to get his mind off of his crimes, his sins, the blood that he drowned in daily.

"Still enough to make me older," Connecticut sing-songed. "Want to get Father?"

"He'll say I'm older," Plymouth said, hoping he could distract Connecticut and keep the conversation about fit to a minimum so he could forget how much his family cared for a murderer. It would make it easier for Plymouth to do what needed to be done.

"Plym..." Connecticut chided, the concern not leaving his eyes.

"I'm fine!" he snapped.

"Is this about Mass—"

"So what if it is!" Plymouth snapped, cutting off Connecticut before he could finish, rising to his feet. He couldn't stand to hear his name anymore because it hurt, because it sank into his soul and ripped it apart, and it hurt, it hurt so badly because no one wanted to use that name to refer to its rightful owner.

"If it helps, I know how you fe—"

"How can you? How can you possibly know how I feel? I murdered our brother and sister and then took our brother's place, and now I'm being celebrated for it! How the fuck could you know how that feels?" Plymouth snapped, tone venomous.

"You aren't the only one whose land is made up of the dead. Rhode is lucky. Newport, Warwick, and Portsmouth are still alive. But...Saybrook, New Haven, they're gone. Because of me. I never took anyone's place like you did, Plymouth, but don't you fucking dare say I don't know what it's like," Connecticut snapped, tone equally venomous, before it faded into something sadder.

In an instant, all of his anger faded from his body, and Plymouth sank back to the floor.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. The urge to get it all over with grew stronger. He couldn't stay here anymore, ruining things for everyone else.

"I know you are. I know it hurts," Connecticut said, sounding like he was holding back tears. "And I can't imagine how you feel, knowing that everyone thinks you are the one and only personification of Massachusetts Bay."

"I don't...I can't be the state that they want me to be, Connecticut," Plymouth whispered as his younger brother pulled him into a hug. *"I can't."*

"Be the state that you want to be, then," Connecticut whispered. Plymouth just clung to his brother, not answering.

He wasn't sure what else he could say.

"New Jersey and I have been planning something," Connecticut then

said, pulling away from the hug, keeping one hand on Plymouth's shoulder. Plymouth swallowed down his tears.

"What?" Plymouth asked. He meant to be politer, to say more, but the words failed him. Connecticut didn't seem to mind.

"We were planning on making a mausoleum in the Land In-Between, wherever Father builds his new home. For New Haven, Saybrook, West Jersey...and for Maine and Massachusetts Bay, if you would like to join us? We still need to wait for Virginia so she can memorialize the ones she got to know, but...do you want to help us?"

"Yes," Plymouth whispered, desperate. He would stay until the mausoleum was complete to ensure that Maine and Massachusetts Bay were memorialized properly so he would have a place to beg for atonement for his sins before he finished things.

It wouldn't be enough. It would never be enough.

But Plymouth had been living in Hell on Earth since they passed. He was prepared to be sent to actual Hell.

He would be better off there anyway.

The Place of Origin

Requested by an Anon on my oneshot request form

"It's hard to believe you were born here," North Carolina said as she and her grandfather-turned-adopted-father sat at the site of what was once the Roanoke Colony, the colony that had been her father's original life. Father laughed.

"It's hard for me to believe, too, considering I barely remember the damn place," he joked, a sadness in his eyes.

"Do you wish you remembered more?" North Carolina asked.

"A lot. I...it's the only part of my childhood I wasn't with Britain or England. I know...I know there's a lot I could have learned from it. It's why I wrote down all of my experiences there when my memory began fading," Father said. North Carolina leaned their head against their father as he wrapped an arm around them.

"And then it was destroyed during the War of 1812," North Carolina said, filling in the gaps. She knew this story well.

"Yeah. I wish...well, there's nothing I can do about it now. I remember the colony, even if I don't really remember what happened between then and Jamestown," Father said.

"Does that bother you?"

"Not really. I have a lot of memory gaps from being a system, so I'm used to it. Plus, James remembers a little," Father said. North Carolina pulled away, brows furrowing in confusion.

"James was alive then?" he asked, shock in his voice. Father shrugged.

"I'm not too sure, and neither is he, but he remembers from what I've said to others before, conversations I don't remember as well,"

Father said, "It's mainly secondhand, but it's the closest thing we have."

"Secondhand is always better than nothing," North Carolina said, thinking back to the stories she had been told about her birth father, the Province of Carolina, by her siblings. She never got to know him, but the stories were nice. "It's weird being home to your birthplace when everyone always says you were born in Mass or Gin's land."

"That's because everyone thought I had died, and I didn't want to correct them. I felt...I thought I would be abandoned again," Father said. North Carolina frowned. It was so easy to see their father as a strong and steadfast figure. It was easy to forget that he had fears, too. A fear they had once contributed to.

"I'm sorry," she said.

"You don't need to be sorry. It's behind us," Father said, "I am glad that I was born in a land as beautiful as yours."

"You're just saying that," North Carolina protested.

"I might not remember much of my childhood, but I remember that. Don't sell yourself short," Father said. North Carolina smiled.

"Thanks, Dad."

Alba Agus A Mac

Scotland and Orcadians, requested by NewJerseySHlol

Alba enjoyed spending time with Arcach, his eldest son, who had been a constant for much of Alba's life. Arcach had been with him for a long time, and while their father-son bond remained strong, sometimes it felt as if they weren't just that but also dear friends.

Even if he was also Nirribhidh's son, but Nirribhidh hadn't been involved in Arcach's life in a long time.

It was also nice to have someone to speak Scots with. Much of the time, people would mock Alba for it, calling it a crude form of English, and that only made him cling harder to the language. Arcach preferred it to English, even though he still spoke Norn frequently at home, as it was his first language, and he always had an easier time expressing himself with it.

"I don't know how you deal with all this modern stuff. I hate it," Arcach said as they watched the cars go by. Alba laughed.

"At this rate, you'll be an older man than I if you keep complaining the way you do," Alba joked. Arcach rolled his eyes.

"You know what I mean, Athair," Arcach began, "This is the era of globalization, and that's really good for you, but us little guys, the ones who are people and not governments, this weakens us. I like some of it, I really do, but...it's hard not to feel nostalgic when the simple fact of the matter is that this could all be helping lead to my death. Scottish Highland Travellers and I have talked about that a lot."

Alba couldn't help but wince. If Arach and Ceàrdannan were talking, that couldn't mean anything good.

"I'm not going to try to destroy your culture," Alba said, "I don't want you to die."

"I've already lost Norn, and sometimes it feels as if I am losing Scots. I know you aren't trying to kill me, but I fear I might die all the same," Arcach said before shaking his head and standing up. "But I am over a thousand years old, in the end. I think I have lived a good life."

Alba frowned, standing up and following his son down the side of the road.

"I'm sorry if I have done anything to make you think—"

"You haven't. I have just had a lot of time to think recently. And..." Arcach trailed off, shrugging. Alba pulled an arm over his son's shoulder, tail curling around his leg.

"Tha gaol agam ort," he muttered. Arcach leaned into his side before sighing.

"I know. And I know I'm not going anywhere. I just can't help but worry," he said. "I think that's why some of my people want me to have my own government or something."

"I can't make that happen. I...I only recently stopped being governmentless. And...you know how Britain is," Alba began, prompting a laugh from Arcach.

"Yeah, the man who sends me daily letters asking me to move into his home so we look more like a unified family, like I'm related to him. No offense, Father," Arcach said with an apologetic smile.

"None taken. I disowned him the minute he started beating his kids," Alba deadpanned as the two came to a stop.

"Then why are you so insistent on trying to change him?" Arcach asked. Alba sighed.

"I want to show him...I want to give him a chance to be better and grow. He's not leaving anytime soon, so he deserves to grow as a person, like we both have over the years," he answered.

"You have too much faith in people."

"And you're too distrusting. It's why we balance each other out so well," Alba said, releasing his son, who laughed.

"Maybe you're right about that," he said, "But I still think it is a bit futile to try and save Britain."

"Well, we'll have to see. In the meantime, I'll stop him from sending letters to you." Alba offered. Arcach nodded.

"That sounds great."

York and Jay

Requested by TheAgenderYeehaw. It is also the 100th chapter of this oneshot book! Wooo!!

"You're a piece of shit, you know that?" New Jersey asked, stomping into the room he shared with Delaware and New York. New York looked up from his laptop and raised an eyebrow.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," he said, but the smirk on his face gave him away. Delaware, sensing the fight this would turn into, sighed and shut his book, standing up.

"Call me when you're done," he said before elbowing his way past New Jersey.

"You know exactly what you did! I can't believe you!" New Jersey exclaimed before beginning to rant, his frustrations overwhelming him. New York sighed and put his laptop to the side.

"Okay, but it was funny, and no one was hurt. Also, it was Delly's idea. He's still upset about your reclaimed land thing and wanted me to remind you of ours," New York said. New Jersey scowled.

"I should have never let him escape," he groaned. New York laughed.

"You good with an arm over your shoulders?" he asked. When New Jersey nodded, New York threw an arm over his shoulder. "Listen, you're my big brother, and that means I have to be annoying to you."

"I'm less than a day older than you," New Jersey deadpanned.

"Yeah, so as your baby brother, I'm allowed to do these things," New York steamrolled on without flinching, "Besides, we didn't actually do it to the Ellis Island buildings. It was just a bunch of old sheets."

"Still, I fought for that land for a long time," New Jersey said,

shoving New York's arm off him. He felt frustrated and angry but tried to keep a handle on his temper.

"And then you did the same thing to Del I did to you," New York said, raising an eyebrow. New Jersey felt like he was being punished for something, but he didn't know what. Why couldn't anyone just say what they mean? Why did people have to be so vague?

"I...are you mad mad at me?" New Jersey asked, shrinking in on himself as the anger was replaced by a deep shame. He hated when he got like this when his emotions changed on a whim and never made any sense. New York's face softened, and his large wings encircled them. They weren't touching New Jersey but shielding him from the rest of the world.

"No. No, I'm not," New York said, "This was just a joke meant to make fun of the fact that history is repeating itself and that even over two hundred years since our independence, we're still fighting over our borders."

The guilt squirming in New Jersey's gut subsided a little.

"It was just a joke?" he asked, wanting to hear confirmation, proof that it was okay, that he was fine, a good brother.

"Yep! Just me and Delly meaning little shits. You're okay, Jay-jay. You always have been," New York said. New Jersey nodded, then relaxed into his brother's arms, feeling New York's wings begin to hug him.

New Jersey smiled.

He was glad that his family still loved him.

False Love of a False Father

Hungary had never been more grateful for his friends. Loyal and brave, they were some of Hungary's greatest allies in the fight for his mind.

While they had met when Hungary was pretending to be human, he had grown to trust them enough to reveal his identity to them. They helped Hungary control the parasite in his mind and promised to free him from it.

Their promises had been enough to make Hungary cry.

It made it easier for Hungary to think when around them. His friend Attila theorized that it was because they believed in a Hungary that was not controlled by the USSR, and that belief helped to clear Hungary's head. Whatever it was, it was amazing.

"Are you sure you can participate?" Soma asked as they prepared for the protest tomorrow. Hungary nodded.

"I'm sure. And I know I have to. This is...I need to prove to my people that I am trying my hardest to be there for them, and I won't let the USSR take that away from me," he said. If the USSR tried—well, it would be pretty obvious that Hungary wasn't helping him of his own free will if he started throwing a fit in public before declaring his love for the USSR.

He knew he could do it, and nothing would stop him.

"Come on, Soma, we knew that nothing was going to stop Hungary from participating in this. I think he's more excited about it than any of us," Attila said with a laugh. Hungary smiled, a rare expression crossing his face.

"Of course I am. If all goes well, then the parasite will be removed from my head, and I won't have to worry about the USSR stripping

me of my free will and making me do things I don't want to do," Hungary said. Soma frowned.

"If...and if things go wrong?" he asked.

"Then the USSR will probably ensure the parasite is in control of me for months to ensure that he still has control...and maybe make me...take care of anyone he sees as traitors. Maybe. With Poland and East Germany, he just forced them to the side and made them thank him for 'helping' them," Hungary said, lip curling in disgust at the memory of that.

"But that won't happen! We need to be positive about this. Thinking about the way things can go wrong is just going to make us feel worse about this," Attila, ever the optimist, said.

"I know. Still, I am going to write a letter to the UN about my real feelings and choices here, just in case we do lose, that way no matter what the USSR says or makes me do, people will know that it is all a bunch of lies and bullshit," Hungary said. Attila grinned.

"Smart. But how do you expect to get it out of Budapest?" he asked.

"I have a friend who is leaving for Austria tomorrow. She's taking it out of the country and hopefully can get it to someone else from there." Hungary said.

He hoped that some other personification did see it. Even if this went well...well it was good to have a record of how controlling the USSR was, how Hungary feared for his health, safety, and free will, and how conditional the USSR made his basic rights.

Someone else needed to know about it.

"That's good. Do you think..." Soma trailed off, and Hungary gave his best attempt at a comforting smile.

"I am hoping and praying that it will not be needed. But...it's always better to have a plan. Just in case," Hungary said. Soma nodded.

"Just in case."

With those words, Hungary did his best to relax. He was anxious about what was to come but hopeful that things would be better.

Things would get better.

Hungary would ensure that or die trying.

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Hungary had been in what felt like hell since he had been taken captive since he was deceived and tricked by the Russian SFSR into believing that he was about to be free of the USSR's influence.

He didn't know where he had been taken after being held captive, but it was tortuous. It was a small room, nothing in it but the chair that Hungary was handcuffed to, and a bright light pointed at his face, right in his eyes, preventing him from being able to see much more than it.

The light seemed to bore into his mind. Even when he closed his eyes, all he could see was the light.

His head ached from it and it made it hard to sleep. He was exhausted. It was torture.

Even when he could turn away, the spots lingered in his vision, which felt blurrier by the day. All of that, combined with the lack of food, lack of water, and the USSR's influence slamming into his mind almost non-stop, allowed Hungary to slowly feel himself slipping away, losing the fight to keep his mind.

It was agonizing, but at least he could be comforted by the fact that his letter had escaped his lands and would soon be made public. He hoped it would be soon, in any case. Once it did, Hungary knew the other nations would demand to see him and demand for Hungary to talk to them. If he could hold out until then, he could reveal the torture.

He just had to hold out.

He had talked to UN after he declared his neutrality, and if the USSR was willing to attack him, then he was sure those rumors of

the USSR preparing to invade his country had not been rumors.

Hungary wondered if that was what the USSR was doing. He knew the man had to be nearby. The parasite in his mind was not the docile sedative; it usually was when the USSR was far away, but an active threat attempting to destroy Hungary's free will was a sign that the man was trying to force Hungary under his control.

He refused to let it control him. Most of his energy was going to fighting off the parasite's control. The advantage of being locked in a cell was that there was nothing to divert his energy from fighting it off.

Hungary did wish that someone would enter the room. He felt that he had been locked here for days, his throat dry and hunger seeping into his bones. If nothing happened soon, he would slowly waste away into nothingness. Perhaps that was what USSR wanted.

The weaker Hungary was, the better it would be for him, after all. And weak Hungary was. Maybe it was a mix of the dehydration, the hunger, and the inability to sleep with a light as bright as the fucking directly in front of his face, but Hungary was tired.

After seconds that felt like hours, Hungary heard the door to the room open. He lifted his head, not realizing how much it had fallen, squinting as he tried to make out the figure in the doorway. Based on the height, he guessed it was USSR or Russian SFSR.

"**Hello, Hungary.**"

So, it was the USSR.

"Hello, parasite," Hungary responded, refusing to give the USSR any respect by switching to Russian to speak with him. The light then turned off, causing Hungary to blink rapidly, fuzzy spots in his vision.

It only served to make his head ache more than it already did.

"**I am sorry it had to come to this,**" USSR said, his face and voice blank of any emotion as he stood before Hungary. The imprisoned nation snorted in a mixture of amusement and disgust.

"**I thought we dropped the pretenses after you had your men arrest me,**" Hungary snapped. USSR sighed.

"**Sometimes, we all must do things we don't want to do. I didn't realize how bad your madness had gotten until Father told me about what you did to him in an attempt to fight off the people trying to help you,**" USSR said. Hungary grinned widely, remembering the adrenaline and satisfaction that came from chopping off one of Russian SFSR's fingers.

"**I wouldn't call it madness, more a justified action in response to an attempt to illegally imprison me and take over my country. I am not a mindless little doll that wants to dance on your strings. If I have to maim everyone in your country to prove that point, I will,**" Hungary spat out, hatred in his voice. The country then swallowed down a harsh cough. His works did not help his dry throat, but Hungary couldn't bring himself to care.

USSR tutted his tongue as if he were scolding a misbehaving child before placing a hand on Hungary's cheek. Reeling in disgust, Hungary pulled away from the USSR's hand, fighting against his exhaustion as he turned his head to sink his teeth into the USSR's hand.

"**Son of a—**" the USSR began before slapping Hungary across the face, forcing his head to the side. Hungary laughed from fear, from delirium, from anger—he didn't know.

"**You want me to be your mindless little puppet? You'll have to fight me for it because I'm not giving you a single inch, parasite,**" Hungary said, spitting in the USSR's face. USSR was quick to slap him again, but Hungary just smiled. "**Try all you want. I know you can't kill me, not with all the eyes on us.**"

"**I can't kill you, but I will ensure you know your place. This corruption is unbecoming of you,**" USSR said. Hungary laughed, which turned into a cough due to his dry throat.

"**Save your lies for someone who will believe them,**" he said, tired of USSR's nonsense. He may have been played for a fool before, but he refused to be ever again. USSR scowled, turning back

on the light, causing Hungary to close his eyes with a small hiss of pain.

"**I don't want to hurt you, but you leave me no choice. Maybe a few days to think about your actions will do you some good,**" USSR said, his tone reminiscent of someone lecturing a misbehaving child, "**Just know I do not want to do this—**"

"**Sure you don't. You just need me under your control quickly—no need to hide it. I can feel you in my mind, trying to take control,**" Hungary said.

"**You are better off this way, free from the people who are actually trying to control you, the people who have driven you to this madness. I am trying to help you. You just need to let me,**" USSR said. Hungary turned his head to the side and spat on the floor.

"**Go to Hell, parasite.**" Another blow landed on his face.

"**Why do you make me do this to you?**" USSR asked, his tone still devoid of any emotion.

"**You choose to fight me. Now you get to fight me.**"

USSR neglected to say anything else, simply leaving and letting the door slam behind him as he did so. As he did, the parasite's attacks on his brain seemed to resume with more force.

Hungary gritted his teeth and did his best to persevere.

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"**You made this choice, Hungary. You decided to be unreasonable. You cannot blame anyone but yourself for your condition,**" USSR said, one of his daily—at least Hungary presumed they were daily; he had no way of knowing how much time had actually passed—visits to Hungary's cell.

They gave Hungary enough food and water to survive, but it was so little that it left him desperate for more, something that USSR knew full well and took advantage of.

"**I'm not making you keep me here,**" Hungary responded, voice steady, before he groaned as the USSR's power increased, making him clench his hands around the armrests of the chair, wrists straining against the handcuffs that kept him there.

"**If you would only stop resisting your place in the world and feeding into the madness, I would be able to let you out. Do you realize how badly it would reflect on your people if their nation were mad?**" USSR asked. Hungary would have rolled his eyes if they weren't clamped tight to lessen the pain of the light in his eyes.

"**You mean how badly it would reflect on you if the nation you invaded were firmly against the invasion and was being tortured in an attempt to make him give into the idea that the invasion—**" Hungary was cut off by a slap from USSR, but he didn't let that bother him. The man was petty and vindictive and wanted Hungary under his control yesterday, but they both knew that USSR couldn't hurt him too badly.

All his threats were empty, and that gave Hungary more power than he would have had otherwise.

"**I am helping you,**" USSR stated firmly, as if it were a fact. Maybe he believed it. It wouldn't surprise Hungary if he did. "**Come on, Hungary. Please, let me help you. You can eat and drink and rejoin society if you just stop giving into the madness.**"

"**Fuck off, parasite,**" Hungary said, bracing himself for the USSR's power to slam into his mind once again. Maybe it was the weakness from hunger and thirst, or perhaps it was the fact that he had to be constantly fighting for his mind with no sleep or rest, but each time, the parasite seemed to come back stronger, wiggling through another layer of Hungary's defenses.

It was becoming less of an annoyance and more of a constant pain. Coupled with the pain from his headache caused by a lack of sleep and the light in his eyes, Hungary's head was feeling more and more fuzzy—distant from his body. He wasn't sure if that was a good thing or not.

"**Let me help you!**" USSR said, sounding more annoyed as the attack seemed to increase in force. Everything around Hungary seemed to turn fuzzy and muffled as he threw his entire being into fighting off the parasite.

He didn't know what happened next, but when he blinked open his eyes, hissing at the light, the USSR was gone.

The parasite wasn't.

Hungary shut his eyes again and prepared to keep up the fight.

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Hungary didn't know what to think when the USSR came into his prison one day, turned off the light, and then dragged Hungary's chair to the back of the room as the smaller nation tried in vain to snap at his fingers.

"**Cut it out! You have visitors,**" USSR said. The sheer surprise of it all caused Hungary to stop. Visitors? Who the Hell was visiting him?

Then, in walked Albania, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Mongolia, as they all crammed into the same room. Hungary laughed slightly, lips twitching into a disbelieving grin.

The audacity of the USSR would never cease to surprise him.

"**Is this supposed to convince me that you are so nice and kind and that I should give in?**" Hungary asked, a mocking tone in his voice.

"**I am not trying anything. Your siblings simply wanted to talk to you about your behaviors. They've been very mad about what you did, especially what you did to my Father,**" USSR said. He really was dedicated to keeping up his farce. It would be impressive if it weren't so annoying.

"**The revolt was childlike and improper, but we are trying to be sympathetic with the madness that has affected you,**" Romania

said. Hungary rolled his eyes as Czechoslovakia chimed in.

"**You have hurt our family and gone against the wishes of your people and your government, and in turn, you have hurt us all,**" she said. Hungary tried to get a better look at her expression to see if he could tell whether or not she was under USSR's control, but black, fuzzy spots persisted in his vision, and he had to give up.

At this rate, that light was going to cause him to go blind.

"**I know I am not as close to you as the rest of them, but this family is very important to me, and seeing you rip it apart like this hurts,**" Mongolia said.

"**USSR is the one hurt—**" Hungary began before the USSR cut him off by putting a hand over his mouth.

"**Behave, Hungary.**"

"**Yes, Hungary, behave. We've all always been perfectly okay and safe under Mo—Father's control,**" Albania said with his usual hint of sarcasm. USSR's eyes narrowed at his works, and Hungary watched as Albania stiffed and then straightened. "**You're hurting us by inspiring people to try and kill us.**"

Those words were clearly not Albania, and Hungary really had to wonder if the USSR thought he would fall for the illusion.

"**Hungary, I don't think that you understand how much this has hurt not only you but our Father,**" East Germany said, something...off about her voice. It seemed...not sad, but there was some strange emotion in it that Hungary couldn't place.

"**We want our brother back from whatever disease or corruption has overtaken him,**" Bulgaria said. With his works, the USSR lifted his hand from Hungary's mouth.

Hungary turned to Poland, who had been strangely quiet. Despite the fuzziness that still persisted in his vision, Hungary watched Poland's lips twitch as if he was suppressing a smile.

Poland was resisting. He refused to denounce Hungary's actions,

and he was resisting. Hungary couldn't help the wide grin that stretched across his face at that.

It looks like he wasn't the only one the USSR had lost control over.

"**What are you grinning about?**" USSR snapped.

"**Do you really think this will change my mind? How many of them are here of their own free will? How many did you need to take control of to force them here?**" Hungary asked.

"**You are the only ward of mine that is unruly and needs to be controlled. The rest know, understand, and love their place. Isn't that right?**" USSR asked, to small nods from the gathered nations.

"**I recommend you all shake off his cont—**" Hungary was cut off by another slap to his face, feeling the parasite begin to wiggle deeper into his mind. Poland's foot moved slightly as if he wanted to interfere and barely stopped himself in time.

It made a happy feeling grow in Hungary's chest, and he resolved to do his best to fight, not just for himself but for Poland and the other satellites who couldn't fight for themselves.

"**Are you sure you want puppets near a madman?**" Hungary asked, a smirk growing on his lips. Barely concealed rage flashed over USSR's face, and Poland bravely took a step forward.

"**Father, it might be best to leave him to the madness for no. I do not think we can change his mind, no matter how much we try,**" he said. It was a risky move with the USSR's anger filling the air, surely sending their parasites to work as it was encouraging Hungary's parasite to increase its pace in consuming his mind.

"**He will be free eventually. The madness cannot take hold of him forever,**" USSR said, looking Hungary in the eyes. Hungary stared back, ready to show the man that he was not beaten yet.

USSR scoffed and gestured for his puppets to follow him out of the room, leaving Hungary alone with his parasite.

At least the light was no longer boring into his eyes. Small mercies.

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Hungary had never felt so weak. His head ached, and he barely had the strength to hold it up anymore, exhausted from a lack of sleep and the constant assault on his mind. The parasite drifted around the edges of Hungary's mind, whispering to him how the pain would stop if he just gave in.

It felt so nice...

No!

Hungary couldn't give in now. Not after so...how long had it been? How long had he been drifting, half-conscious in this hell?

Ever since USSR's other puppets had left, Hungary's sense of time had started decaying even further. He had managed to fall asleep a little after they left, with the light gone, but someone had come back into his cell and dragged him back in front of it, ensuring that Hungary was awake again before leaving.

Being alone was worse than being mocked. It felt as if all his resistance had been for nothing and that USSR had decided—had come to the conclusion that Hungary was going to fall under his control, and there was no use wasting energy on Hungary until he had.

His head hurt.

His lips were dry.

His vision blurred from the light.

If you stop fighting, you would be allowed to leave, and all the pain would disappear.

Hungary clenched his fists as he attempted to shove the parasitic thought from his mind.

"Being under your control will just cause me more pain. I refuse,"

Hungary snapped. He knew he was alone in the room, but some part of him was sure that USSR could hear him through the parasite.

He refused, he refused, he refused.

No matter how much pain he was in, he refused to give in. He refused. He would fight the parasite with everything he had until nothing was left. The parasite would not tempt him into giving himself up. It would have to burrow into his mind until all that made up Hungary was gone.

He knew the parasite was getting close to doing just that.

Where were the other countries? Where was the response to his letter? Hungary had been trapped here for what felt like days—was no one suspicious? Where were the people to come and help him, to condemn the USSR for what he had done?

Where was his help? Had the rest of the world abandoned him at the USSR's mercy?

Surely all Hungary had to do was hold out until then.

But when was it coming?

Hell, was it even coming? Or had he really been abandoned?

Hungary didn't know. He hoped he hadn't.

His free will wouldn't survive being trapped here forever.

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Ве́нгрия was waiting silently in the chair, waiting for someone to come and collect him. The strange madness that plagued his mind seemed to give into his Father's power a few minutes before, leaving Ве́нгрия lethargic and weakened.

He simply sat there, waiting for his Father's people to come and collect him.

Time passed by in a foggy blur until someone entered the room and switched off the light. Ве́нгрия obediently held still, attempting to blink the blurriness from his vision. However, it didn't seem to do much, and he squinted at the person in front of him.

"Father?" he asked.

"Hungary. It is good to have you back," his father responded, grabbing Ве́нгрия's arm and pulling him to his feet. Ве́нгрия nodded in acknowledgment.

"Thank you for saving me from the influence of those traitors and returning me to my own mind. I am sorry for letting myself get caught under their thrall." Ве́нгрия said, his voice sounding distant.

Ве́нгрия *felt* distant as if he was watching his body from afar.

"We need to prove a point to those traitors, show whose side you're really on. We have some traitors that can be executed publicly. If you are the one to do it, they will never doubt your allegiance again," Father said. Ве́нгрия nodded, still feeling so far away.

"Of course, Father," he couldn't bring himself to say more than that. His mouth felt foreign on his face, and it was hard to form words, easier to just agree.

Ве́нгрия followed his father out of the room, legs shaking slightly. He didn't voice any concerns; he just followed his father as they walked and walked and walked.

Ве́нгрия couldn't be sure what was happening around them. Sounds and images blurred into nothing. Father was the only thing his brain could grasp onto and focus on, so he did just that.

Eventually, they stopped, and Ве́нгрия felt a weapon be pressed into his hands by his father.

He blinked, and then his father was gone, and in front of Ве́нгрия was a man. Ве́нгрия knew what he had to do. He raised his gun to fire, and—Hungary knew him—he couldn't—Attila—his grip on his weapon loosened for a moment before Ве́нгрия adjusted his grip.

Вéнгрия didn't know why the man looked so...whatever that emotion was at his execution. He looked as if he felt bad for Вéнгрия as if Вéнгрия was the one about to be executed.

"**Don't blame—**" the man began before Вéнгрия kicked him in the side.

"Shut up!" Вéнгрия barked. The man just smiled sadly at him.

Вéнгрия fired.

Meeting Mississippi

Requested by NewLostIslands

Delaware was excited to meet the new territory that had joined their family. It would be the first time one of Delaware's siblings had been born without him being there to see them, the first time a new territory had been created. While Tennessee and Ohio had been territories before, both of them had been created when Delaware and the other original states were still within their dad's head when they were still under the Articles of Confederation.

He was excited.

Mississippi had been born two days ago, but Delaware still had yet to meet her, with how busy his dad had been since her territory's creation.

But now, his father sat him and his siblings down, ready to introduce them all to Mississippi.

"She's been very excited to meet you all. Ohio thinks she's the sweetest thing in the world and wants me to tell you that he is the favorite sibling," Da said.

"Ohio's the only one that's met her," Kentucky said, arms crossed from his seat in Virginia's lap.

"We should give this one to him. He doesn't have much else going for him," Pennsylvania joked, laughing slightly until a look from their father made her back down. "Es tut mir leid."

"Now, she's a bit shy, so please try not to overwhelm her. I just want to do introductions and let her get used to being in command of the body and the house," Da said. Massachusetts nodded.

"Don't worry, Father. I'll make sure everyone behaves," he said. Da

gave Massachusetts a grateful look before his eyes began to grow distant. As they waited for Mississippi to take control, New York elbowed Delaware in the ribs.

"What to swap names?" he asked. Delaware rolled his eyes.

"One, she's a baby; two, our names are written on our faces," he said, quickly shutting down that idea. New York pouted right as Mississippi spoke.

She was hunched in on herself as if she was trying to make herself smaller. Her voice was gentle and quiet, only adding to the effect that she wanted to hide.

"Hello, Mississippi," Virginia said, standing up and lowering her voice to a gentle tone. "My name is Virginia. I'm your big sister."

"Nice to meet you, Virginia," Mississippi said, uncurling slightly. Virginia smiled.

"Would you like them to introduce themselves, or would you like me to introduce them to you?" Virginia asked. Mississippi whispered something, and Delaware was sure his heightened hearing was the only reason he could pick up on the whispered "to me."

It was strange hearing Mississippi speak. It was Da's voice, just softer, quieter. At least when Ohio or Uncle James spoke, Delaware could imagine them speaking in their real voices since he still remembered what they sounded like.

He had no idea what Mississippi sounded like, which made her speaking all the more offputting.

Delaware tried to put it from his mind.

"Okay, well here we have Georgia, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Rhode Islands and Providence Plantations—"

"But you can call me Rhode Island. I know my name is long." Rhode Island interrupted, getting a little giggle from Mississippi.

"Yes, you can call him that. Then we have the triplets, New Jersey, New York, and Delaware," Virginia said as Delaware waved at Mississippi, "Then Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Tennessee."

"Don't be afraid to get our names wrong. We're always happy to reintroduce ourselves when needed. We know there are a lot of us," Massachusetts said, his voice taking on a parental tone. Mississippi nodded.

"It's...it's nice to meet you," she said, still looking so shy. Delaware smiled.

"It's nice to meet you too, Mississippi."

When the Father Had Power (Non-Canon)

This was written as a request and is not canon to my other stories. It's just a fun request I wanted to write. Thank you Brookylen3 for this very fun request!

When America had woken up in his childhood bedroom at his father's house, his initial response had been confusion. Most of the people within their system weren't on good terms with Britain and wouldn't willingly spend the night at his house.

America himself was annoyed, knowing now that he might be roped into talking to his father, something that he hated with a passion.

"Okay," he said, sitting up, "Who decided to spend the night at Dad's place?"

"Not me or Becca," James said as if his hatred for Britain were not obvious in every interaction they had, every word James directed towards that man.

"Not I. I have no reason to approach Britain," Mabel said, her tone curt, *"But I...I don't think it was any of us. None of us have reason...unless there really is personification for that West Florida micronation."*

"I hope there isn't," America muttered before looking around, eyes narrowing as he looked around the room. This looked like his old childhood room, which he knew had been rarely used since his independence, but something looked...off about it.

The room wasn't covered in dust as one would expect, and it looked...it looked lived in, with the same furniture that was there back in the 1600s, furniture America could have sworn was moved out of the room even before his independence.

"James, are you getting a weird feeling of déjà vu?" America asked.

"I am, yes. I think we should leave. Now…this…this isn't right," James said, sounding unusually panicked about their whole situation. America couldn't blame him. He felt it as well, something pricking at the back of his neck, alarms warning that there was something so unspeakably off about what was happening.

"Agreed," America said before getting out of the bed and leaving the room. The hallways held the same feeling that something wasn't quite right and seemed just as outdated as America's former room.

"You don't think?" Mabel asked. America shook his head.

"That's impossible," he said, cutting off the idea before she even vocalized it. Time travel wasn't a thing. Britain was probably just trying to delude himself into thinking he was still important and that his kids were still afraid of him.

However, the nervousness grew, and America began walking quicker, hoping to leave Britain's house before he ran into any of his siblings—or worse, his father. England had become tamer in recent years, but Britain remained as, well, Britain-like as ever.

America should have known his luck wouldn't hold.

"What are you doing?" Britain's voice snapped from behind him, somehow not in the soothing, manipulative tone that America was so used to, but one that was clipped and annoyed.

It was how Britain talked to people like France. Even after America's war of independence, Britain had never dropped the attempts at manipulation in his voice and words.

Why now?

"Just ignore him," James said, *"He can yell at us later for being rude, but we need to regroup and figure out who was fronting when we entered his home."*

America took James' advice and tried to do just that, but was stopped by Britain grabbing his arm, causing America to turn

around, rolling his eyes at his father's behavior.

"I don't know how I'm here. I'm about...to..." America trailed off as he finally got a good look at his father.

His flag was...his flag was *wrong*. It was his father's voice, but his face bore not the Union Jack (any version of it) but *England's* flag. America's first thought was to open his mouth, comment on how his father had changed his face to match England, something that his father swore he would never do, when the rest of Britain's appearance caught up with him.

"Shit. Mabel was right. Time travel," James said, shock and disbelief in his voice.

Britain looked as human as a countryperson could without being in human form. For most of America's life, that had been the norm until an ill-advised conversation with Wales led to Britain accidentally triggering the process that gave a countryhuman animal traits, resulting in him gaining dragon features eerily similar to Wales.

Britain didn't have that.

"Oh my god," America mumbled as James got close, ready to start fronting as soon as America expressed any sort of discomfort.

"Who are you?" Britain asked again as he looked America up and down. America's mouth gaped open as he tried to figure out what to say to this past version of his father—a version...a version of his father that was shorter than him.

Huh. Britain had always felt so powerful and intimidating when he was an empire, when America was a colony, but looking at him now, he seemed...so small.

"I'm...your son. From the future," America said, feeling himself start to unwillingly slide back into the mold that Britain had so *lovingly* crafted for him. Figures. Over two hundred years, and he still fits in that mold perfectly.

"Finn, I love you, but now is not the time. I can take care of this until we

find a way back," James proposed. America shook his head. He didn't know why he wanted to stay. Maybe, just maybe, a small part of him hoped that there was something there within Britain that he could find. Maybe he was just sliding back into his mold and wanted Britain to punish him. He didn't know, but he didn't want James to front.

This was important. It was something that America needed to do.

"America, don't be a stubborn dick about this!" Mabel snapped, but James shushed her.

"He's not a child anymore. He's learned to handle Britain, and I can still step in if needed," he said.

"My what?" Britain snapped, disbelief in his eyes. America instinctively shrunk in on himself, and although he was taller than his father, a small part of him was whispering that they needed to make themselves smaller, smaller than Britain. He was supposed to be taller, after all.

"It's me. Jamestown, Virginia, Colonies, whatever name I am going by right now. That's...that's me," America said, voice growing quieter. This was so stupid! Why could he talk to his version of his father but not this one?

"Colonies?" Britain asked, his voice still disbelieving but still surprised, as it slipped back into that sweet, manipulating tone, like poisoned honey, seemingly sweet but with hidden malice.

"Yes. I don't know how this has happened, Father," America said, waiting, *hoping* that Britain would show an ounce of concern, of excitement over a son from the future. Instead, Britain huffed, crossing his arms.

"Your posture is poor. No son of mine should slouch like that. And take off those glasses; they make you look undignified. And get a haircut. Honestly, what has happened to me in the future if I let you get away with these behaviors," Britain said, crossing his arms, analytical eyes picking apart America and exposing his flaws to the world, leaving him bare and exposed. "And that rudeness. Clearly,

you have forgotten your manners."

"America, don't listen to him. He's a heartless bastard who would see the world burn to feed his own ego," Mabel said, anger in her voice.

"And none of that is true. You're just fine the way you are. You're more powerful than him in our proper time, so clearly, his advice, like always, is useless," James added.

"If this is the way you behave, then I should at least do my future self a favor and fix things," Britain said before turning around, waving for America to follow him, "A harsh punishment will do you some good."

America shook his head, tears building in his eyes. His father was no better in his time. Why did he expect anything different now? He hoped, and he hoped, but it never went anywhere. Why was he always such an idiot about this?

"You want your father to love you. That's no crime," Mabel said.

"No."

"Excuse me?" Britain said, turning around, a lip curling, anger blazing in his eyes.

"I said no. Fuck you. *Fuck you!*" America yelled, tears falling, "All I ever wanted was a fucking father, but that never mattered to you. You just wanted something to control! You're pathetic! Pathetic, you hear me? You can't stand to hear anything you dislike or stand to give up an ounce of control, and it's fucking *pathetic*."

There was a brief silence as Britan stared at America, face going through several phases of shock.

Then,

"Holy shit Finn," James said, having clearly been caught off guard by America's outburst.

"I'm ready to go, James," America said, shaking slightly and feeling drained.

"Don't worry. I've got you."

The Dragon's (Grand)Son

TW for the littlest bit of body horror

"Wales, none of those flags would look right. You're already represented by St George's Cross. You don't need anything else," Britain said, rolling his eyes at the argument. Ever since that minister last month suggested she would consider redesigning the Union Jack to include the Welsh dragon. Since then, Wales had been pestering him to try them out.

"You haven't even tried them. Come on, Britain. You've never had an official flag. I know you can change it," Wales said.

"If I do it just to show you them, will you leave me alone?" Britain asked, annoyed. Wales nodded, and Britain sighed, trying to picture some of the redesigns he had seen. The first was the one where the white backdrop on the Union Jack, where Saint George's Cross was represented, was then replaced with the yellow of the Flag of St David.

"See, was that so hard?" Wales asked. Britain rolled his eyes, looking at the smaller Union Jacks on his hands.

"This yellow is so bright, Wales," he commented. Why Wales thought this was a good idea, he would never know. Wales rolled his eyes.

"Well, then, use the black from St David's flag. Then Cornwall can feel represented too," he said. Britain shook his head.

"They would just clash with the colors. And I'm not experimenting with the green from your flag either!" he snapped before Wales could even suggest that.

"Touchy, touchy," Wales said, "But fine. What about the one with y Ddraig Goch in the center? Dragons are cool, and it's a red dragon, meaning it matches your color scheme."

Britain gave Wales a skeptical look.

"Won't that just force me into having dragon traits if I do that?" Britain asked. If there was anything he hated most in the world, it was the idea of gaining animal traits. Britain didn't know how the others put up with having primitive instincts shoved into their minds and making them all act like fools at times. Britain would fight tooth and nail to prevent that from happening to him.

"Would it? You already don't have an official flag, and I know you can change it to Scotland's and England's flags because I've seen you do it before—don't try to deny that—so surely if the universe were going to give you dragon traits, it would have done so already?" Wales questioned, sounding genuinely confused.

Wales not knowing something. Britain never thought he would see the day.

Still, he had a point.

"I suppose you're right. After all, a flag doesn't have to be present on the face for the traits to stick, as with Scotland, England, and yourself," Britain said, thinking back to the three's lion traits. "However, I still think this is stupid."

"Is that nervousness I hear from the great Britain?" Wales said, smiling at his pun. Britain rolled his eyes, thoroughly tired of Wales' nonsense.

"I'm not nervous," he said, rolling his eyes, preparing to change the flag to the one with the dragon. Wales laughed, Britain's flag changed, and then he stumbled, feeling as if a heavy weight had crashed into his head.

"Deyrnas Unedig?" he heard Wales call, panic in his voice, which seemed to be fading, getting fainter and fainter.

Britain suddenly realized he was pitching sideways, blinking slowly as he fell. Wales caught him, and Britain tried to open his mouth, to say something, to do something, but the heavy weight in his head prevented him from doing anything.

He closed his eyes and slipped away into the blackness.

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Wales stared at Britain in shock as the man collapsed into his arms. What had just happened? He had just changed flags. That wouldn't do anything unless...unless...

A pit sank into Wales' stomach. It wouldn't—he didn't—

But Wales was quickly proven wrong as Britain's shirt began to tear, new bones ripping through it, as the cartilage of his ear seemed to shift, changing from their human appearance. Wales dropped the man in surprise before wincing.

Britain was not going to be happy if he found out about that.

Looking at how the bones of a tail were forcing their way out of his back, Wales knew he wasn't going to be happy regardless. Oh, he messed up. He really, really messed up.

"HEY GUYS?" Wales called, hoping that there was someone nearby, someone who could help. He was panicking slightly as he watched the rest of Britain transform—how his nails sharpened into claws, how muscle and flesh grew over the bony tail and wings, how scales began forcing their way out of his skin.

Wales shuttered. Was that what it was like for the humans who watched him transform?

"What is it, Wales..." Scotland's voice said before trailing off. Wales turned around, wings flaring out and hitting the walls.

"I was messing with him about the fact that I am not on his flag, so we were experimenting with some of the proposed ones, and he did the one with the dragon on it, and—and we didn't think it would do this! We thought that it would have given him the traits when it was first created if he actually did that!" he said, words coming out in a panicked rush.

"Holy...Jesus, Wales, you've gotten us in a lot of trouble," Scotland said.

"On the bright side, he'll be fine, but on the not-bright side, he's going to be so pissed," Wales commented, looking back at Britain. Aside from the fact that he seemed to be either fast asleep or unconscious, he looked fine.

Well, as fine as one could be after sprouting dragon features. His flag still held y Ddraig Goch in the center, and the sight of it made guilt squirm in Wales' gut. He really hadn't meant for this to happen. He had assumed it would be safe, that Britain would be fine. It wasn't an official flag, after all.

Wales should have known better. He was the oldest. He was supposed to know these things to keep everyone safe. This was his fault.

He needed to do something to fix it.

"Help me carry him. I'm going to take him to my room," Wales decided, taking charge. He was going to do his best to ensure Britain adjusted and do everything he could to fix this. He would need to call his tailor about getting some clothes made for Britain to account for his new tail and wings, and probably cut his old shirt off of him, but he could take care of that later.

"Your room? Why?" Scotland asked, but still did as he was told.

"I'm not going to try to fit him onto his bed, and my nest will be better anyway. You know my room is always warm, and with it being so cold, I'm worried that this idiot might start hibernating," Wales said. He was the local dragon expert. He was the oldest. He could do this.

Scotland nodded, grabbing Britain's legs and tail, and Wales grabbed Britain's arms. There was little either of them could do about the wings for now, but hopefully, they would be fine. Wales' room wasn't far.

Once they entered Wales's room (after some awkward maneuvering through the door—thank God Britain hadn't woken up), they gently placed him down on Wales' nest as the nation began to murmur slightly in his sleep.

Ignoring the look that Scotland was certainly shooting him, Wales went over to the sewing kit in the corner of his room, grabbed the scissors, and walked back to Britain.

"What are you doing?" Scotland asked.

"Cutting the shirt off. He's going to be really uncomfortable when he wakes up if it's caught on his wings—trust me, I would know," Wales answered as he began cutting Britain's shirt off, taking care not to nick his skin.

"Oh, good point. I hadn't even thought about that. Are you going to take care of the pants, too?" Scotland asked. Wales shook his head.

"No. I am going to call my tailor and send him some of Britain's less-worn clothes so he can get started on modifying things for Britain. Custom can come later, but Britain won't have anything unless he wants to fit in some of mine," Wales said.

"Well, you have broader shoulders compared to him. I think it could work," Scotland said. Wales shrugged as he tugged the now destroyed shirt off of Britain.

"Yeah, but I'm a lot shorter than him, so it probably wouldn't work," Wales said, throwing the shirt remains at Scotland as he put the scissors back. Then he walked back to his bed, collecting his softer blankets to put on him. His new senses would probably be disorientating, so something softer might help with that.

It always helped Wales when they became too much.

Wales purred slightly as he began to throw some of the blankets onto Britain, as the man turned in his sleep, growing slightly. Wales smiled at the sight, a warmth growing in his chest.

"Well, at least this isn't all bad," Wales said. Scotland laughed, and Wales looked up at his younger-older brother to see him smiling at Wales and Britain.

"You're excited about this," he commented lightly. Wales rolled his eyes.

"Of course I am! Another dragon, since England is so deep in denial about who he is."

There was also the fact that with the new traits, he looked almost painfully like England did back when he was younger, just red and with less feathers. It brought back some buried memories of Wales' time as Gwynedd, memories that Wales struggled to keep.

"Malta's a dragon. So is London, and some of the counties," Scotland pointed out. Wales shrugged, looking away.

"He looks so much like England did when I first taught him how to fly. He looks so much like the person England was that it hurts, Scot." Wales said. Scotland froze. Wales rarely went into serious memories that he had from Gwynedd, preferring to focus more on using them to torment his family with embarrassing moments they thought they had buried.

"He does look like England," Scotland said, voice softer.

"If England's face hadn't aged with him," Wales joked, trying to lighten the mood a bit. Scotland rolled his eyes before turning to leave.

"I'm going to throw away this shirt and inform everyone else. I'll tell them to stay away so Britain can adjust," Scotland said. Wales smiled.

"Diolch yn fawr, Fearghas."

"Not a problem, Llewelyn. Make sure Jackie-boy doesn't hurt himself when he wakes up," Scotland said. Wales nodded.

"No problem. I can wait until he wakes to send some of his clothes to Owen. I'm going to give him a call first. The poor man has to make or adjust an entire wardrobe of clothes," Wales said, pulling out his phone. Scotland laughed.

"I'll see if Man can get in contact with her tailor about this, too. He knows how to account for wings, too, so hopefully that will help your tailor from being overworked," Scotland suggested.

"Sounds like a great idea," Wales answered. Scotland nodded and then left to inform the rest of the household. Wales began dialing Owen's number, keeping a careful eye on Britain's sleeping body.

Hopefully, it would all work out in the end.

Wales didn't know what to do if it didn't.

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Britain woke up cocooned in warmth.

He didn't remember how he had fallen asleep, but he was so warm and comfortable that he wanted to stay that way forever. As awareness (unwillingly) began to return to him, he became aware of a peculiar vibrating coming from his chest.

His tired mind tried to come up with an explanation before it dawned on him what it was.

It was purring. He was *purring*.

Britain shot up in shock before letting out a squawk as the blankets he was tangled in tripped him up, sending him crashing back down into the bed. Face burning in humiliation, Britain began trying to untangle himself as Wales's familiar laughter rang out from overhead.

So that must have been the source of the purring. There was no way that *Britain* could do that. He was normal. Wales wasn't. Calming down from the panic, Britain reached out for their bond, yanking at his as hard as he could, cutting off Wales' laughter as the bond tightened around his neck.

"Help me out of this, Cymru, and stop laughing!" Britain ordered as he reached for the blanket overtop of his head. Taking it off, he noticed that he was in Wales' room, in the center of the "nest" that Wales had built for himself because the primitiveness in his mind convinced him that a bed wasn't good enough for him.

"Sorry, but you looked kind of ridiculous," Wales said, walking over, "At least you were in the nest and didn't decide to kiss the floor."

Britain rolled his eyes with a small huff.

"What am I even doing here?" he snapped before realizing his shirt was gone. Scowling, Britain turned to Wales for an answer.

"It's cold in this house sometimes, and I didn't know if the shock of gaining them would force you into hibernation," Wales commented. Britain's brow furrowed in confusion.

"What the devil are you talking about?" Wales raised an eyebrow and gestured at Britain, who finally realized what had happened to him.

His hands began shaking as he examined the new claws on them, turning his head to look at the wings and tail coming from his back. Britain turned back to Wales, trying to bite down the growl growing in his throat.

"You knew this would happen! You did this on purpose to make me like *you,"* he snarled, trying to force down the new instincts he could feel reeling their ugly head. A part of him wanted to lash out at Wales, to claw at his face. Britain did his best to swallow them down.

That was wrong. He needed to control them.

"I promise you, I didn't. I thought...I thought it if would happen; it would have happened already. I'm sorry, Britain, I really am. I promise you I can help you adjust to this. I have had years of—" Britain cut off Wales with an inhuman snarl but bit his lip, shame building up in him. He couldn't do that. He needed to control it.

He needed to control, *to control to control to control—*

"I don't need your help, Wales," Britain said, taking great care to keep his voice even, to keep it normal. Human. Like how it should be. Like how he should be.

"Are you sure? I can help you gain better control using my experiences," Wales said, slipping in the possibility of control, a tempting word that was oh so enticing. Britain bit his tongue, grateful that his teeth remained normal, before exhaling.

"No," he stated, resisting the temptation. "I can do this on my own. I will tame the beast you have infected me with, and I don't need you tempting me into working with it or some such nonsense."

Now free of the blankets, Britain stood up, lifting his hands to brush off his shirt, scowling as he remembered it was gone. Wales cleared his throat.

"If you need to borrow a shirt—"

"You're almost half a foot shorter," Britain snapped.

"I called my tailor and explained the situation. Once you approve clothes to be modified to account for the new," Wales cleared his throat, "additions, I can send them to him."

"Well, at least you're good for something," Britain muttered, hands twitching as he almost went to adjust his shirt before remembering he didn't have one on. Clearing his throat, he spoke again. "I'll go see if there are any I am willing to sacrifice for this project until we find a way to undo this."

"Britain—"

"Has anyone else been told of this?" Britain asked, not letting Wales get a word in, not wanting to listen to what the man had to say. This was his fault, and Britain would not stand for his excuses, even if Wales weren't his child.

"Scotland helped me bring you to my room, and he told the rest of the household," Wales said, deepening Britain's scowl. He wished that this had remained a secret until the process was undone.

"Well, no one else should know until this is fixed," Britain said. Wales sighed.

"You know that there is no fi—"

"Well, clearly, no one has tried!" Britain snapped, wings flaring out. Britain cleared his throat, pulling the wings back and composing himself, feeling more anxious than ever. He needed to be composed. He was a proper country, a powerful country, and he couldn't let

this...this curse destroy him.

He wished he had a shirt on, as tugging at its hem and ensuring it was clean and presentable was always soothing. He felt exposed, vulnerable, like this, Wales' slitted pupils piercing through his very body and staring at his soul.

"Believe that if you want, then," Wales said, his voice even but with a kind of inflection that made Britain feel like a child being chastised, "But short of severe bodily harm and death, nothing is changing what you now are. I'll be here to help you when you're ready to accept it."

"I don't need your help," Britain said before correcting himself, "With taking care of these features. Please tell your tailor that I would like a shirt done by this evening."

"Of course, *Your Majesty,*" Wales mocked, bowing slightly as he extended his wings to their full length, an imposing sight, "One last thing. y Ddraig Goch is still on your flag. I don't know if you want to keep it, but considering your reaction to everything..."

Britain quickly changed his flag back, feeling bitter disappointment as he noticed the dragon traits stayed. A small part of him had foolishly hoped that they might disappear when he changed his flag back.

"Thank you, Wales," Britain said before leaving the room, shivering slightly at the drop in temperature.

He didn't care what Wales said. There had to be a way to undo this.

And by God, Britain would find it.

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Wales wondered why Britain had to be so goddamn stubborn. The man was clearly struggling with everything, from tails slammed into doors to him almost breaking his favorite cup to an ever-growing exhaustion Wales knew was either from the cold or from Britain's bed not being made to accommodate his new wings.

Every time, Wales offered to help, and every time, he was refused.

Britain was going to break at some point, and Wales just hoped he could convince the man to accept help before that happened. But as hours turned into days and the bags under Britain's eyes grew darker, Wales began to be more forceful in his attempts to get Britain to accept his help.

"He's going to hurt himself," England signed to Wales one afternoon as they watched Britain attempt to read a book, struggling to sit down comfortably, shivering fiercely.

"He already is," Wales answered, "He's too cold and only getting colder. His body doesn't retain heat like it used to."

"Have you told him that?" England asked, his hands moving quickly instead of the slow, deliberate signing that England preferred, a sign that even England was becoming concerned.

And England *hated* anyone even implying he had dragon traits, and now here he was talking about his own experiences in an attempt to help Britain!

"I've tried," Wales said, "He's too stubborn, and he's still upset with me."

"Should I try? I have ways of dealing with it without being obvious. It might help," England signed. Wales shrugged.

"You can try, but if he won't listen to me, the chances of him listening to you are slim," Wales said. England nodded but walked over to Britain anyway, tapping him on the shoulder. Wales couldn't see what England was signing, but Britain looked furious at whatever it was, eventually standing up and marching away.

Britain looked like he wanted to yell but was trying to temper any dragonic instincts that were rearing their head as a result of his anger and seemed to have just elected to leave the room. England walked back over.

"He's letting his anger and fear over this cloud his sound judgment," England signed. "He's going to get hurt."

"You know that well, huh?" Wales asked, unable to resist slipping in a jab at England's bad habits. England's face twisted, anger appearing on it.

"That's necessary. It's a problem I can fix. Britain isn't dealing with a problem, so he's hurting himself instead," England said. Wales shook his head. England and Britain were so painfully alike, so *stupid*.

Both of them had to know they were hurting themselves. Wales wondered why they thought it was worth it.

"You can tell yourself what you'd like. I'm going to go and check on Britain," Wales said, walking out the small door Britain took. He hadn't gone far, leaning against the wall, breathing heavily as his claws dug into his book.

He looked like shit, exhausted and disheveled, and Wales felt a pang of concern go through him as he walked over.

"Jack. You need to sleep. And because your bed doesn't seem to be working out, and with how cold you are, I'm going to say you should do it in my room. I promise I will leave the room to give you privacy, but nothing is changing this, and no one wants to watch you fall apart like this," Wales said, knowing that the last part was probably a lie but just needing to say something to convince Britain.

Anger flashed in his now-slitted eyes, but it faded, replaced with a resigned exhaustion.

"Fine," Britain muttered. Wales sighed in relief, wrapping a wing around Britain and seeing how the man almost unconsciously leaned into his side, shivering slightly. Unfortunately, Wales wasn't any better at retaining body heat, but hopefully, being in the warmth of Wales' room would help.

Wales didn't want to see him suffer.

He was glad Britain was accepting help.

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Britain hated everything about the situation he now found himself

in. Leaning against Wales, cold down to his very bones, and having to give into the desires of the primitive mind that now existed within his—he hated every bit of it.

He should have cut off the features when he had the chance. He felt the urge the day he got them, and he sat in his room, a sword that Cornwall had given him for his four-hundredth birthday in hand as he agonized over the decision.

He sat there and started to press the blade into his wings, but he ended up throwing the sword aside. What was wrong with him? Why couldn't he do anything right?

Britain felt like he had spent the next few days in a haze. His head hurt so much, and he felt cold and tired all the time. He couldn't sleep because of his stupid wings, and every little sound seemed far too loud.

He felt miserable. Nothing was the way it was supposed to be, and it made him feel sick.

He hated it.

When he entered Wales' room, he was caught off guard by how warm it was, his shoulders relaxing. It seemed to pierce through the cold within him and start warming his very core.

"Why is your room so warm?" Britain asked.

"Because as a country with dragon traits," Wales said, turning to look Britain in the eyes, "I cannot regulate my body temperature well. More specifically, I am very, *very* sensitive to the cold."

Britain could tell Wales was scolding him. He couldn't bring himself to care. Who cared if he was more sensitive to the cold? He was supposed to be the normal one. England, Scotland, and Wales all had animal traits (he didn't have anything from his old flag. It wasn't like that), and Northern Ireland was deaf. He was the normal one.

He refused to let these traits change the way he did anything. He needed to be normal, so normal he would be.

"I'm not," Britain said in a half-hearted attempt to convince Wales to drop it. Wales just hummed and released Britain from where he had trapped him under the spotted wing.

"If you get too cold...well, I don't know if you'd die of hypothermia or just end up hibernating, but something tells me you don't want either of those things to happen, so maybe consider prepping for that more. I tend to wear thermal underwear, modified, of course, on colder days just to help my body trap more heat," Wales explained, his attempt at giving Britain advice. Britain rolled his eyes.

He didn't need thermal underwear or anything else. He would find a solution that didn't require him to do weird things to fix his issues.

"I'm sure that won't be needed for me," Britain said. Wales gave Britain an incredulous look before rolling his eyes.

"It's your funeral then," Wales said before gesturing towards the...the *nest.* "Make yourself at home."

"This is my home. You're a guest in it!" Britain snapped.

"I helped build this place, but sure," Wales said with a shrug, looking unperturbed by Britain's threat. "Because you need to get some rest. Promise me you will."

God, did Wales' voice sound so soft and concerned, his eyes reflecting care and understanding and—

It was all too much.

"Yes, *Dad*," Britain said, injecting as much venom as he could into his voice, "I'll go to bed now. Are you going to tuck me in or leave me alone?"

Some strange emotion passed across Wales' face, but he mercifully didn't say anything, just turned to leave the room. Britain huffed, crossing his arms.

Why did he agree to this again?

Wiping exhaustion from his eyes and suppressing a yawn, Britain walked over to the nest and began trying to make himself comfortable.

It was an awkward and humiliating experience, but at least he was warm, the cold slowly fading from his bones. As it did, Britain felt his eyes begin to flutter close and his body curling up into a small ball.

After several unsuccessful attempts to force his body to lie straight, Britain accepted that it would be curled up and rested his head on a balled-up blanket.

Annoyingly, Wales was right, and the nest and the warmth of the room were more comfortable than Britain's bed, and he began to drift off to sleep. He was then rudely awoken by the rumbling in his chest—the godforsaken purring—and he sat back up, trying to get it to stop.

It wasn't dignified; it wasn't right. He shouldn't be doing this. Britain would have been fine keeping every other trait if he didn't get this one.

It was the worst.

It was humiliating to know that his body could just go against his mind and start producing that sound, that sound he hated so.

But it never stopped, not really, and all of Britain's attempts were for naught.

Britain went to lie back down, relishing in the space he had to stretch his wings out.

Maybe he could find a way to stop when he was a little less tired.

Britain closed his eyes and let himself fall asleep.

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"I don't know how you talked me into this."

"I didn't. I'm blackmailing you." Wales responded.

"Ah, yes, that's how." Britain deadpanned, looking down where the waves crashed against the cliffs. "You know if I fall, I will probably die."

"Then don't fall," Wales answered, feeling giddy. It had taken almost a week after Britain finally let him help to convince the man that he should learn to fly. It had probably helped that Scotland forced Wales and Britain to make a public announcement about it, and now society expected him to learn how to fly, no matter how much Britain didn't want to.

"Well, there go my plans for today," Britain said in a rare moment of snarky humor for him. Wales smiled broadly in response.

"Don't worry. I won't let you die. I plan to be flying below you, and I plan to catch you and bring you back to the top as many times as I need to," Wales said, extending his wings and giving them an experimental flap, feeling the familiar thrill that always came before a flight rising up within him.

For the next two hours, Wales led Britain through a series of exercises meant to get him more comfortable with his wings as well as familiar with what he needed to do in the air. Although Britain didn't say anything, Wales could tell by the tension fading from his shoulders that he appreciated the preparation.

Britain was a man who loved knowledge, and Wales was happy to provide him with as much as he could.

Eventually, Wales nodded and began walking to the edge of the cliff.

"I think you're ready for a few practice flights. Nothing too strenuous, and you certainly don't have to master it today, but we should at least get one attempt in," he said.

"Can't we...can we wait until tomorrow?" Britain asked, sounding nervous. Britain, honest to God, sounded *nervous.*

"I mean, we can, but I want you to at least get one attempt in with

everything fresh in your mind. Because I know you're going to keep putting this off and putting this off if I let you get away with not doing it now," Wales said. Britain sighed and slowly began to walk toward the cliff edge.

Wales then ran forward, leaping off the cliff and letting his wings snap open to catch his fall, gliding out over the ocean before flapping his wings and turning around, moving so he was about twenty feet from the cliff, as to give Britain space but also be close enough to grab him if needed.

Wales then lifted up his hands and began signing towards Britain, making sure to slow and slightly exaggerate his movements so Britain could see them.

"I believed in you. Jump when you are ready," Wales signed before waiting. After about fifteen minutes of Britain pacing on the cliff, he finally ran and jumped off, failing briefly before getting a few flaps in, although still clearly struggling.

Wales swept forward and grabbed his arms as his wings began to falter, and with two strong flaps of his wings, he brought them back to the edge of the cliff, dropping Britain before landing.

"See, was that so bad?" Wales asked, laughing a little at the annoyed look Britain gave him. It reminded him so much of when he was teaching Celtic League to fly.

"It...could have been worse," Britain eventually said. Wales grinned, throwing an arm over his son's shoulder.

"I told you you could do it. Want to try again?" Wales asked. Britain shook his head.

"No...tomorrow maybe, but I'm not ready to do it today," Britain said.

"That's fine," Wales said with a nod. "Let's go home then."

And for the first time since Britain's transformation, there was no hostility between them.

A small part of Britain felt guilty for being comfortable in his body. He felt guilty because he felt as if he had lost some battle and given in to the wishes of his enemies.

Logically, he knew that couldn't be true, but it didn't stop it from *feeling* true.

He didn't let the guilt stop him...that much.

He slept in Wales' nest almost every evening. It was the only place he really could fall asleep, with his bed being too small for his wings. They tried to stay on opposite sides, to avoid each other, but sometimes Britain awoke underneath one of Wales' wings, feeling warm, safe, and content.

Which led to the one major issue that had come about.

Britain was starting to see Wales as a father figure.

He knew he shouldn't—that ship had sailed long ago, but he couldn't help it. Every flying lesson, everything they did together as Wales helped Britain adjust and learn about what he was; that idea only seemed to grow stronger in Britain's mind.

He hated it. He didn't want to make Wales uncomfortable, to lose the warmth and guidance that had been helping him so much, that he had never had access to before (aside from those years with Scotland before Scotland realized Britain wasn't worth the effort), and he didn't know what he would do if he lost it.

But then he ruined everything. So simple of a mistake, and yet now Britain stood to lose everything that he had just gained.

Just a slip of the tongue and Britain felt his new normal crumble around him.

"Good night, Dad."

Britain had flushed red, torn between stammering excuses and pretending it didn't happen, feeling almost lightheaded from his

fear and embarrassment.

"Do you see me as a dad?" Wales asked. He didn't sound angry, but Britain knew he was just waiting for a confirmation before he took it all away, and Britain was left with nothing.

"Yes," Britain said, his voice small and weak, the tone shocking himself and Wales, based on the expression that Wales held.

"I'm okay with that, Britain. I figured I would have been grandpa considering—"

"NO!" Britain yelled before throwing his hands over his mouth. He didn't mean to yell—didn't want to, but he couldn't think about that.

He was the *original* Britain. He was no replacement. He was Britain.

"I'm sorry. I know...it's easy to forget how hard it is when you are so comfortable with it," Wales said, his voice kind as he reached out a hand towards Britain. Wales was a replacement. He was...he understood.

That was good. At least Britain didn't totally ruin anything.

"I'm sorry."

"For what?"

"Calling you dad."

"Why would you need to be sorry for that?" Wales asked. There was no faking the confusion in his voice—Wales sounded as genuine as he could. Britain looked up at him in shock.

"But...but you're not...I didn't ask," Britain said, looking away. Wales laughed, placing a hand on Britain's shoulder, a small smile on his face.

"I'd be honored to be your dad," he said, pulling Britain into a hug. Britain hugged him back, squeezing Wales tight before relaxing into his grip, relief and joy flooding into him.

Wales didn't hate him.

And he had a dad.

For the worst thing to ever happen to him, the dragon traits had given him a whole lot.

Britain was glad that he had them.

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Britain was curled up in his nest, head resting in his tad's lap. Tad was running his hands along Britain's back and wings, tracing shapes in a repetitive, soothing motion that was slowly lulling Britain into a blissful state of unconsciousness.

Britain was vaguely aware that he was purring, but the part of his brain normally so concerned with that had been turned off, and Britain continued to relax.

Then his tad lifted his hands, and Britain let out a little whine at the loss of contact, blearily lifting his head from his tad's lap in an attempt to ask what was going on.

All that came out was a mumbled noise as his tad pushed Britain's head back onto his lap, rubbing circles on the small of his back.

Satisfied, Britain resumed his purring before a new set of hands joined his tad's scratching at the base of his ears.

Britain's purring only got louder as he melted into his tad's grip, letting the stress bleed out of his body and letting the blissful sensations carry him off to sleep.

When he awoke, his tad was gone, Britain's head now resting on the blanket they had bought the other day. Britain sat up, wiping sleep from his eyes with his knuckles.

"You're a really heavy sleeper," he suddenly heard a female voice say from behind him. Jumping slightly (and then trying his best to hide it), Britain turned around to see the Celtic League curled up on the other side of the nest.

"Thanks? What are you doing here?" Britain asked. Celtic League smiled.

"I'm here to meet my newest brawd. Well, older brawd, just one that only now was readopted," she said. Britain nodded at the reminder.

"Right, Tad is your father," he said before getting hit with an unfamiliar wave of self-consciousness, "Do you mind that? I know I am not popular with—"

"I'm happy to have a brother," Celtic League said, "Especially one as adorable as you."

Britain flushed, "I'm older than you!"

"Still a cutie-pie," Celtic League teased, "And even if you're older, I know things like where Tad hides his blackmail if you ever want to team up against him."

And, God, Britain wanted to be perfect, to be of his proper standing and not engage in childish shenanigans, but...he also wanted to feel human. The past few days had made him feel more human and more like a person than he ever did before. So he pushed aside his worries and doubts and held out a hand.

"That sounds great to me," he said as Celtic League took his hand, and they shook on it.

And for once, Britain felt genuinely, truly happy.

A Drowned Out Voice

Requested by @the-personiftranslator on Tumblr.

If there was one thing District of Columbia hated more than anything, it was election season. Listening to her siblings argue over who was the better candidate, over who was right and who was wrong, was exhausting.

What made it all worse was the fact that District of Columbia couldn't vote. She never had before. Not a state, not good enough for the vote. She had no voice. She never did.

Sometimes, she felt that no one ever really saw her unless they wanted something from her. She loved her father, but she hated how he sometimes treated her as an assistant, expecting her to do his paperwork as he fucked off to God knows where.

The government treated her the same way as if she were an employee for them to boss around. No one ever took her seriously. She was a woman; she wasn't a state.

She was the District of Columbia, and to most people, that meant very little.

District of Columbia had laughed about it before. *How funny was it that the capital of the nation couldn't vote for president?*

She was born lesser than her siblings, and even with the endless responsibility her father put on her, even with all the love and warmth that she received from her family, she felt as if there was some great distance between them.

She thought she would find comfort and solidarity with the territories.

She didn't.

They were either in her father's head and saw her much the way her father did, as a well-respected member of the family that her father loved and cared for and one who had no right to feel isolated.

The ones outside her father's head saw her as entitled.

"You're not a territory, Dee," Alaska said as he prevented her from joining their territory meetings, "You have more respect and rights from the government than any of us, and it would be weird to have the capital in meeting for *territories*."

Then Alaska laughed as if what he said was humorous, and District of Columbia tried her best to bite down the tears she could feel welling up.

She felt so alone. Why did she feel so alone?

"I see," she said, voice even, "I apologize for wasting your time."

District of Columbia had then turned around, walking back to her room as she tried to keep her posture and stride study, as silent tears made their way down her face.

Too good for the territories but too bad to be a state.

That was the grand old District of Columbia for you. Capital of the United States of America, not allowed to vote in her father's elections, not allowed to vote for her own damn mayor, just a second-class citizen there to make the lives of everyone a little bit easier!

Sometimes, she felt as if she weren't considered family.

She felt invisible.

She always had.

The Showcase

Queen Victoria had a strange fascination with Britain's colonies. She was always so interested in what their land was like and what exotic and strange creatures existed within them. However, as she was queen, she could never experience those things firsthand.

Which is what brought Britain to this moment, dragging one of his colonies to meet the queen as a sort of demonstration of how colonies acted and how Britain civilized them.

He had selected Hong Kong, a colony still relevantly young, allowing for Queen Victoria to see what an unmolded colony looked like, but still one well-behaved enough to demonstrate how Britain was removing their savage nature and purifying their souls.

Plus, he was from an exotic region and looked Oriental, which was a bonus as it would allow Queen Victoria to see some of the more exotic things she enjoyed.

Britain had spent the last month preparing Hong Kong for this meeting, going over everything he needed to know and removing any visible traces of savagery from his voice and dress. While slightly resistant at first, he soon gave in, knowing it was for the best.

But the personal lessons had allowed for Hong Kong to mature quickly, and Britain was sure if he did it with some of his more...stubborn colonies, they would soon realize how damaging and dangerous their stubborn disobedience was.

But before he could get to do any of that, Britain had to finish this meeting with Queen Victoria.

"Come on, Hong Kong," Britain said, prompting his son to quicken his pace, falling in line to be a step behind his father.

"Apologies," he muttered. Britain clicked his tongue.

"Don't be so quiet. You want to make sure people can hear you," Britain said. Hong Kong nodded.

"My apologies, Father. I didn't mean to be quiet," Hong Kong said, louder this time. Britain nodded.

"Good. You will do your best to be well-mannered, understand?" Britain asked. Hong Kong nodded, and Britain smiled.

He didn't understand why Queen Victoria was so interested in meeting his exotic colonies. Sure, they were from savage lands, but Britain ensured that they never adopted any sort of savage behaviors, being as well-behaved and civil as a European child.

His children were good and, therefore, were a better reflection of him rather than the savage lands they originated in.

"Good morning, Your Majesty," Britain said as he entered the room. Hong Kong followed obediently, stopping when his father did and keeping his head slightly bowed, just like Britain taught him to.

"Good morning, Britain," Queen Victoria responded, her eyes flickering to Hong Kong. Britain smiled.

"This is my son, Hong Kong," Britain said, putting a hand on Hong Kong's shoulder and squeezing it tightly.

"It's a pleasure and an honor to meet you, Your Majesty. Thank you for having me," Hong Kong said, bowing.

"He speaks English well," Queen Victoria remarked. Britain preened at the praise, smiling slightly.

"Of course. I wouldn't let any of my colonies go without a proper education. After all, by civilizing the countryhuman, you civilize the people, and Hong Kong has come so far," he explained, squeezing Hong Kong's shoulder in warning as the colony seemed to bristle slightly. Hong Kong quickly relaxed, and Britain's smile widened.

"Can he speak the native language?" Queen Victoria asked. Britain nodded.

"He can, but we try to limit that so as to not impede his progress. However...Hong Kong, you may introduce yourself in the native language," Britain ordered. His son nodded.

"Ngóh giujouh Hēunggóng," he said, seemingly very uncomfortable with speaking the language. Britain was happy about that, as it showed just how far his son had come, how he was aware that a lesser, primitive language would reflect poorly on him.

That was a lesson that had taken a few beatings to sink in properly, but it was worth it to see the results it produced.

"Oh, how interesting," Queen Victoria said. Hong Kong seemed to shrink in on himself a little.

"Thank you, Your Majesty, but it's not something to be that proud of. I am working to be a proper colony and have been trying to throw aside my savage roots as best I can to do so. Father is wonderful at showing us the way to be civil," Hong Kong nervously said. Britain smiled at his words, releasing his grip on Hong Kong's shoulder and letting the tightness of their bond loosen to demonstrate how pleased he was with Hong Kong's words.

"Thank you, my son," Britain said, getting a genuine smile back from Hong Kong.

"For your son, he looks little like you," Queen Victoria commented. Britain gritted his teeth slightly, brushing invisible dirt on his shirt to soothe the unwanted emotions. He knew Hong Kong was oriental, but it always irked him when people pointed it out.

There was little he could do about that, but it was always annoying when people pointed out his appearance as opposed to all the work Britain had done to purge the savage demon from within them and make them look and act as British as possible.

"Well, his land might be mine, but he still has savage peoples. They prevent him from ever being truly British, but Hong Kong is

working hard to be as close as he can. While his appearance cannot change, his civility shows great promise for his people. He can be tamed, so his land can as well," Britain explained. Hong Kong shifted slightly at that, face changing, but a quick tug to the bond had his smile returning.

"It's wonderful to see the work you are doing there pay off so well, especially since Hong Kong is a newer colony," Queen Victoria said. The praise made Britain's heart happy, as he swelled up in pride, grateful that someone appreciated all the work he put into making his colonies civilized and well-mannered.

The colonies could be ungrateful little brats at times, sometimes so insistent that he was hurting them, a sign that savagery had indeed taken hold of them if they thought being civilized was painful. Scotland and Wales never complimented his efforts, so distant at times and refusing to talk about his parenting methods, and England was...well, England was England, but at least he had told Britain that he approved.

"I pride myself on ensuring that they will have happy and prospect-filled futures, as any parent would," Britain explained. Queen Victoria smiled.

"Would you mind if I invited him to lunch?" she asked. Britain bit down his initial protest, knowing that this was his queen and he should listen to her.

But he was worried about what Hong Kong would do if he weren't there to ensure that Hong Kong stayed under control.

Well, if Hong Kong went against Britain's teachings, he would just have to work harder to ensure they stuck.

"Of course. I'm sure I won't need to ask you to behave?" Britain asked as he turned to Hong Kong, voice sweet as he tightened the bond, letting the chains wrap around his wrists. Hong Kong shook his head.

"You won't, Father. I promise," he said. Britain kept the bond tight, a reminder he was listening and that Hong Kong would not be

allowed to get away with any savage behaviors or delusions, before nodding his head at the queen and taking his leave, smiling as he felt Hong Kong lean into the bond.

"There's a good boy."

Missouri's Medical Report

Bonus scene from A Civil Disagreement

Missouri followed orders.

Unlike the other slave states, he was loyal. He saved lives, not destroyed them—a doctor, not a soldier. And he was a *good* doctor.

Even if he felt guilty about what he had done to Michigan.

It was necessary, he knew that, but that didn't make it hurt any less.

Michigan was an amputee now.

As angry as Missouri was about that fact, his temper had been soothed by Mississippi turning herself in, the guilt so strong she surrendered, even if the army she had been with didn't. Missouri had heard she was still in the dark about Michigan's condition. Missouri might have considered telling her, but he had been ordered against speaking to her.

And Missouri followed orders.

Martial law had helped to keep him loyal.

So Missouri continued playing his role as a doctor, writing reports for the surgeon-general's office and preparing specimens, like Michigan's amputated wing, to be sent to the Army Medical Museum for further study.

Those were his orders.

Missouri obeyed.

Any part of him that might have felt guilt over his actions, might have asked Michigan for his permission to send the wing away, was drowned out by the all-consuming bliss of martial law.

"What are you writing?" Michigan asked. Missouri had elected to write his reports by his brother's side so he could be there if any health issues arose. While the amputation had gone well, Missouri still worried that if Michigan died from an infection, it would still be considered a death caused by another country, as Mississippi shot him, and Missouri helped to amputate the devastated limb.

There was still too high a risk that they could lose their brother forever.

"A report on your injury for the surgeon-general's office. I'm required to write one for all my cases," Missouri explained. Michigan shifted uncomfortably.

"Oh," he said, looking perturbed.

"It's an order," Missouri clarified. His family knew he was under martial law. Missouri had practically begged for it, so Missouri knew when he did something that might have been considered abnormal before the war, he had a reason to give.

"Do you...why did you ask for martial law, Souri?" Michigan asked.

"I needed to ensure that the traitors in my state wouldn't corrupt me. I am happier this way, loyal," Missouri said, letting his pen fall still as the fog of martial law began to cloud his thoughts.

It was the most annoying thing about martial law, but Missouri knew it was important. When he wasn't sure if it would affect what he was doing, he would take a small break from it, something that helped soothe his mind.

Despite its flaws, martial law was...so nice.

Michigan stayed silent, and Missouri looked over to him.

"Why are you asking?" Missouri asked. Michigan sighed.

"I don't know...I've just been thinking a lot. It's all I really can do," he muttered, crossing his arms and looking away from Missouri. Missouri frowned before reaching over to pat Michigan's hand. He knew he probably should be able to think of more ways to comfort

him, but his mind couldn't think of anything, with all his emotions numbed to allow him to do his work and forget about the traitors.

"You'll get better soon. I promise. Mississippi will face justice for what she did, and everything can..." Missouri almost said that things could go back to normal, stopping himself as he realized, no, they couldn't.

Things would never go back to normal.

"Everything can get better. Once the war ends, things will get better," Missouri corrected. Michigan still looked unconvinced.

"I'll never get better," he said. Missouri sighed, picking up his pen and continuing his report. Before martial law, a part of him might have been concerned with handing over information about his family to humans, but he knew the information was going to go into good hands, be used to help teach people about medicine and learn more about the human (and countryhuman) body.

So, he continued his report while trying to offer his medical knowledge to Michigan.

"If you were destined never to heal, brother, you would have died when Mississippi shot you. You're healing, and you're surviving, even if you are down a wing. You will...you will continue to get better," Missouri reasoned. Michigan was silent, and Missouri looked up from his report to check on him, seeing his face twisted into a frown. Deciding not to pry into whatever was upsetting him, Missouri turned to his report as he began to detail Michigan's experiences after his surgery.

"How would you feel?" Michigan then asked, voice somewhat angry, "If you found out you could never fly again?"

Missouri blinked, processing the question. He loved flying, as all his winged siblings did. He didn't—he wasn't sure how to answer that. Losing flight was one thing, but Michigan's was different. He lost his wing serving his country.

Yet, Missouri knew how badly he wo—

If you are hurt in service to your country, any injury that comes from that is worth it.

Martial law seemed to whisper to him, cutting off any thoughts and soothing any fears he might have had.

"If I lose a wing in service to my country, then it is not a loss. It is proof I am loyal," Missouri ended up saying after a few minutes of silence before turning to Michigan with a small smile. "It hurts now, but you didn't lose them for a stupid reason. It shouldn't have to be a bad thing."

Michigan scoffed, crossing his arms.

"I don't know why I expected you to understand," he said. The words hurt, but Missouri tried to extend understanding to his brother. He knew Michigan was hurting. Missouri had been treating him since that terrifying day when he fell from the sky.

"I'm trying to, Michigan," Missouri eventually responded before standing up. "I need to finish my reports. Have a nurse fetch me if your condition seems to get worse."

Missouri felt bad about leaving Michigan behind, but he knew that the conversation was only going to keep turning for the worse.

He tried to help, but Missouri treated wounds, not hurt feelings. Michigan would get better with time. They both knew that.

Missouri would just need to give him space.

Sammy's Crush

When American Samoa decided to join this theater, he hadn't expected to fall in love. But how could he not?

Fauna was the most beautiful person that American Samoa had ever seen. They had a soft voice that became so confident and powerful when they acted and dark brown eyes that American Samoa could easily get lost in.

They were funny and witty and had recently moved to American Samoa's land from his sister's country, meaning that they were also moving about and trying to learn new things about the community.

American Samoa had put together little outings with the rest of the theater every now and again, but every time he tried to arrange something for the two of them alone, the words dried up in his throat.

He had never felt this way about anyone before. He had had crushes before and brief, short romances, but no one had ever made him feel this way before. It was as exhilarating as it was terrifying.

"You need to ask them out," American Samoa then heard from behind him. He turned to see his friend, Petelo, sitting behind him with a slight smile on his face. "Because it's really obvious that you have a massive crush on them."

American Samoa sighed, reluctantly pulling his eyes away from Fauna.

"I've tried, but I just get so flustered and...and I can't think or form words right," American Samoa said.

"You're smitten, my friend," Petelo said, patting American Samoa on the shoulder.

"I know..." American Samoa groaned, "I'm lucky my Tina and tuafafine haven't figured it out yet."

He knew both of them would try and needle information from him or just show up to meet Fauna themself, but neither opinion was something American Samoa wanted until he could talk to them normally.

"If your mama's anything like my mama, she knows someone has caught your eye, even if she hasn't said anything," Petelo said.

"Luckily, my tina is terrible at social cues and really bad with romance, and typically doesn't realize she's in love until she's been asked out, so I think I'm safe," American Samoa said.

"What about your dad?"

"AroAce," American Samoa deadpanned, causing Petelo to let out a startled laugh.

"Oh, no wonder you can't ask them out. No one in your family knows romance," he said. America Samoa sighed.

"I would protest, but I don't think you're wrong," he said, eyes turning back to Fauna, a smile tugging at his lips as he watched them go over their lines. Fauna caught his eyes and grinned, causing American Samoa to flush bright red, breaking eye contact to stare at his hands. His stomach was doing somersaults, and his heart was fluttering widely.

Petelo clapped a hand on my shoulder.

"My friend, Malosi, the world's best romantic," he said, causing American Samoa to stick out his tongue at him. Once Fauna's rehearsal finished, they walked over and sat beside Petelo and American Samoa.

"N-nice performance," American Samoa stuttered, giving Fauna a thumbs up before blushing from embarrassment.

Thumbs up? Who did that?

"Thank you, Malosi. That means a lot," they said. American Samoa's blush deepened at the compliment, and Petelo leaned over to whisper in American Samoa's ear.

"I'll leave you two lovebirds alone," Petelo said before standing up and walking away. "Sorry, Fauna, but I have to use the restroom. I'm sure Malosi here can keep you company."

American Samoa's eyes widened in panic, desperately appealing to Petelo for aid. But his friend was an asshole and simply smiled as he walked away, leaving American Samoa all alone with his crush.

"Uh...h-hi?" American Samoa stuttered.

"Hi Malosi," Fauna said, their voice gentle, "I've been meaning to ask you something."

"You-you have?" American Samoa asked. Oh, don't tell him they thought he was weird, or didn't want to be around him or—

"Malosi, it's okay," Fauna said, cutting through his panic as they placed a gentle hand on his. American Samoa relaxed some, giving Fauna his best attempt at a smile.

"Thank you," he said, "Wh–what did you want to ask?"

"Would you like to go on a date with me?" Fauna asked. American Samoa's brain stuttered to a halt as he stared at Fauna in shock.

"I'm American Samoa," he blurted out as soon as his brain started working again, unsure what else to say, his brain running on an endless feedback loop of panicked excitement.

"Yes, I know. Will you go out with me or not?" Fauna said. American Samoa gaped at them.

"You...you know?" he asked.

"You have the same tattoos, and after you told me about your tenth different sibling, I put it together," Fauna said, smiling softly. American Samoa let out a small laugh before nodding, the butterflies in his stomach so strong that he felt nauseous.

"I want to go on a date," he squeaked out. Fauna's grin widened, and they pulled American Samoa in a hug. Once again, American Samoa's brain stuttered as he tried to process what was happening.

Fauna was hugging him. Him! And they had asked him out.

This was the greatest day of his life.

...right after Tina agreeing to be his Tina. But a close second.

"Oh, I'm so glad," they said. American Samoa then relaxed into their hug, hugging them back. Fauna pulled away, still smiling at American Samoa, whose heart skipped a beat before returning to its happy flutters.

"Where...where do you plan on going?" American Samoa asked, finding himself less nervous and more happy and excited now that he knew the feelings were mutual.

"I was hoping for a walk on the beach, maybe. So we can talk and learn a little more about each other," Fauna said, taking American Samoa's hand. His face flushed red again as he stared at their clasped hands before finding his voice, nodding.

"That sounds great," American Samoa said. Fauna pulled him a little bit closer before pressing a gentle kiss to his cheek.

"I'm glad," they said as they pulled away. American Samoa stared at them in shock.

Fauna kissed him! He began giggling slightly, happiness overwhelming him.

"May I kiss you again?" he asked. Fauna smiled and kissed him again, this time on the lips, and American Samoa couldn't be happier.

"About fucking time!" Petelo then yelled, causing American Samoa and Fauna to spring apart.

American Samoa was going to kill his friend first.

Panic Attacks and Drunkenness

This is a oneshot written for ApeculiarChild2 and her book "When Mountain Meets Sea." It's America's POV of the chapters "Pyrophobia" and "Of Sorrow, Strength, and Strong Liquor" which were written alongside this oneshot.

Lydia liked Hawai‘i. She was gentle and kind, so willing to help them even though it was clear that she was very out of her element in dealing with their fragmented soul. Sometimes Lydia wished to tell her, but she knew the fear everyone else in their head held close to their chest.

That they would be called mad and locked away or killed.

They didn't need that before, and certainly not after the war that they just had. If it got out that the United States was mad, it might restart the violence as the former Confederate states used it to justify their treason.

It was better secret, no matter how badly Lydia wished to tell Hawai‘i, wished to tell little Siki, wished to be referred to by her proper name and pronouns.

It was nice to spend time with them either way, getting to know them outside of the stories she had been told.

Sikaiana was bold and spirited, but tonight, she seemed content to lean against Lydia and talk to her about anything and everything.

"The sea *does* have ears, Uncle Lika," Sikaiana said indignantly. "It's laughing at you right now because you don't think it's true. Mama, tell Uncle. The sea has ears, doesn't it?"

Lydia laughed, and then the fire popped. Her breath hitched as James' panic seemed to grow, the man joining her near the front of their mind.

"Is the fire under control? Are we safe from it?" he asked with all the fear of a man who had been caught in a fire and burned before. Lydia pursed her lips, wishing she could respond, instead sighing and moving away from the fire, feeling James relax as she did so.

"Are you okay, Uncle Lika?" Sikaiana asked. Lydia smiled.

"I'm okay. I just don't want to be too close to the fire if it pops. I like this shirt and don't want to lose it due to a stray ember," she lied. Sikaiana opened her mouth, but before she could say anything, the fire popped again, and Lydia slowly felt herself be inched out more by James' panic.

Lydia relented, and James took control of the body, sighing as he realized that he was now the one in charge and could prevent things from getting out of hand.

"W—I had a bad experience involving fire once. You learn to respect it," James said. Then, there was heat on their neck, on the burn scar there, and suddenly they were on fire.

Their body was burning, flesh peeling off where their right arm was.

They were on fire. They needed water.

Breathing hard, they looked around, blurred, smoke-filled vision making it hard to see. But then they saw water, and they rushed towards it, stumbling and collapsing in the shallow area of the water, sobbing from the pain in their burns.

Britain...Britain and Lower Canada were destroying their capital. Those two nations took their son, and now their capital was burning, and they were burning, and everything was on fire.

Then, Britain was in front of them, talking, hands reaching out and grabbing them. They panicked further, breaking free of his grip and pushing him backward.

They needed to get away. They needed to get out of here. They were on fire. Why wasn't the water putting them out?

Britian's voice dug into their brain a little more, and they bit down a sob, covering their face in fear.

"Father, Father, *please*. I know I am sinful; I know I need your guiding light. Please have mercy, Father. I promise I will obey you, *please*," they begged, the familiar mantra that had kept them alive through so much falling out of panicked lips.

Britain said something again, but they couldn't hear it, the roar of the flames too loud. They just elected to curl into a small ball, arms protecting their head as they sobbed, waiting for Britain's divine punishment while pleading for his mercy.

After what felt like hours, their panicked breathing began to subside, the sound of flames fading to the gentle sounds of waves crashing against the shore. They opened their eyes and peeked out from behind their arms.

There was no Britain or Lower Canada.

In front of them was Hawai‘i and Sikaiana, no one else. Distantly, they realized that they didn't have their glasses on, having somehow lost them in their panic. Breathing heavily, it seemed like a minor issue compared to the fear that had flooded their body.

Suddenly, everything came flooding back, and they—and America curled in on himself, ashamed.

"Lika?" Hawai‘i asked, her voice panicked. America bit down a sob, unsure of why he was trembling and still felt so terrified, nodding as he tried to stand to walk to Hawai‘i but collapsing as soon as he tried to.

Hawai‘i rushed over and sat down by America's side despite the fact that it was going to get them both wet. Still trembling, America leaned into her side, relishing in the comfort she brought.

"I'm sorry," America managed to get out. Hawai‘i shook her head.

"You don't need to apologize, Lika. It's okay," Hawai‘i said. The two then sat there in silence for a few moments before Sikaiana sat down beside her mother, as the two of them began a hushed

conversation in another language.

If America knew the language, he was too tired to understand it.

For some reason, he felt exhausted, like he was about to pass out at any moment.

"Hawai‘i? I think...I think we should go ho—back to your home. I need...I need sleep after that," America asked, nervous. Hawai‘i nodded, practically leaping to her feet, then helping America to his as he wobbled after her.

Sikaiana followed, shooting America nervous looks as he did his best to give her a comforting grin. Sikaiana flinched and looked away. America frowned.

What had happened? He knew he hadn't been the one in control of the body for a while, but how had they become...trapped, almost, in the memory of the Burning of Washington?

It was so sudden. One moment, America was half-conscious, warm, and comfortable somewhere; the next, he was burning and burning and *bur—*

America did his best to cut off that thought, realizing that his breathing was starting to speed up again. Hawai‘i shot him a worried look, and America gave her his best comforting smile.

His glasses were still missing.

He was too tired to care. He had a spare pair somewhere, anyway.

When they arrived back at Hawai‘i's house, America pressed his back to the wall and slid down to the floor, pressing his head in his hands as he tried not to sob.

His head felt empty.

He felt alone.

He didn't like that. It was more terrifying than the fit he had just had. He hated it when everyone else was quiet. It felt wrong.

"Hawai‘i?" he asked, not lifting his head from his hands, "What is the strongest alcohol you have? I think I need some."

"I am a good woman with no alcohol in this household. What made you think—" Hawai‘i said, her voice stern. But America ignored that, pressing onward.

"Hawai‘i, are you going to play this game *now*?" he asked. He needed a drink. He needed to drink until the pain faded, and he didn't need to think anymore. He needed it. "Please...just let me drink."

Let him heal his pain.

"I..." Hawai‘i began before trailing off. "In any case, you're soaked to the bone, and so am I, and I am *not* drinking while my daughter is awake. I need to make sure she is changed and put to bed."

America tried to breathe out a calming breath, but his breath shuttered instead like he was a scared little kid who had just been sobbing. He then felt a gentle touch to his sleeve, causing the wet fabric to brush against his skin.

It helped calm the lingering panic. You can't be burned when you're wet, after all, and America felt himself relax some.

Hawai‘i then tugged at the end of his sleeve, and America looked up, seeing the worry in her eyes. Guilt squirmed in his gut.

"Come on. I have to dry this now. I'll fetch your bags, and we can get your clothes out of there. That's my condition if you're going to drink. You have to get dry. I will get a towel from the laundry room." Hawai‘i said.

If she did that, then she would see his other scars, the signs of his weakness. He knew she had seen the burn, but only a small portion. Hawai‘i had no idea how bad it was. She would see the rest of the burn, the stab wound from Canada, the scar on his chest from the Indian massacre of 1622, the pattern of his failures and pain.

He couldn't show her that. He couldn't let Hawai‘i see them.

"Don't worry about me. I will... I'll get dry," America said with a tiny nod, suddenly hyper-aware of the scar on his neck and the faint glow of the smallpox scars on his face.

He wondered if Hawai‘i noticed them, too.

"Good. I'll go check on Sikaiana and put her to bed. When I get back... we'll see what is in the back cabinet, alright?" Hawai‘i said. America nodded, and Hawai‘i left the room.

America didn't go to get changed; instead, he dropped his voice to a whisper.

"James?" he asked, hating how his voice seemed to break, "Where is everyone?"

There was silence, and America went to stand and get changed before his brother answered him.

"I was helping the territories. That...that scared everyone, and I wanted to make sure they were okay. I'm sorry," James said. America nodded.

"It's okay. Are they okay?" he asked.

"They're fine, but I'm keeping anyone but Mabel, Lydia, and Caleb from coming up and talking to you. I don't...in case something happens again, I don't want anyone else being caught up in it," James answered, worry in his voice.

"Thank you," America said. They fell into silence again, but this time, it was a comfortable silence, not an ominous one, as America could still feel James nearby. America returned to his room and changed into drier clothes, feeling calmer but still antsy after he did so.

"Are you sure you want to be drinking now?" James asked. America nodded.

"It helps. You know that," he responded. James hummed, a sign he didn't agree with whatever America was doing, but mercifully, the man remained silent.

"Don't drink till you pass out, at least. Your kids are one thing, but little Siki's another. She really looks up to you," James said. America looked down at his feet.

"She shouldn't." America said, sliding to the ground again, "I'm just some random country from miles away. A country that's probably insane in some way. No sane person is like me. I...I'm probably not helping them any."

"You're not insane," James said, sounding worried, like America might regress to how he was as a colony when he was so deep in denial about everything he lied to himself as often as his father lied to him.

"I feel like it. I haven't felt right since...since..." America began trailing off, breath catching in his throat, unable to say those words. He closed his eyes and buried his face in his hands. He was so pathetic. He couldn't even speak the name of the war without panicking. He couldn't spend time with people he cared about without getting trapped in his memories.

What was wrong with him?

America's hands were shaking again, and he lifted his head and grabbed his wrists in an attempt to stop that.

"Am—"

"Lika?" Hawai‘i asked. America's head shot up before he forced himself to relax.

"Hello, Hawai‘i," America said, before smiling weakly, "Can I have something to drink now?"

"Yes. I made my conditions clear, and you look dry and changed, so... I suppose you can have it." Hawai'i said. "I don't think I will drink, though."

"You said you didn't want to drink while Sikaiana was up," America asked, furrowing his eyebrows.

"I know. But I also don't want... Lika, when I get drunk, it's not... it's

not dignified. It's... To be honest, it's shameful. I get forgetful of things that happen, and I am... Well, to put it plainly, I'm not good company." Hawai'i said, folding her arms and looking away. "I know you need it tonight. But I..."

"It's alright. Wai." America said, looking away, feeling guilty for making her think she needed to drink with him. The only person who needed to drink was him, something to wash away the pain. "Don't worry about it."

"Stupid brother and his stupid... Who's telling him I have alcohol? Who's telling him I have alcohol for him?" Hawai'i began muttering in her language as she searched through the bottles. **"This one's good. Not too strong."**

"Oh, thank god, at least she'll ensure you're being responsible with this," James muttered. America rolled his eyes—both at Hawai‘i's comment and at James.

"You're horrible for that, Wai. I asked for the strongest," he said, trying to keep his voice light and not let on how badly he *needed* a drink.

"It's a strong drink, Lika. I'm letting you know." Hawai'i said worriedly.

"Strong? Well, that's a good thing, isn't it?" America said quietly, knowing that Hawai‘i's definition of strong meant that it would not be a very strong drink. "I'm not a lightweight like you. Strong for you may be different."

"Lightweight?" Hawai'i asked, putting a hand over her heart. "You dare to call me a lightweight? I'm hurt."

"Are you telling me Little Ol' Wai is drinking strong liquor?" America said teasingly. The thought of Hawai‘i drinking strong liquor was so absurd it nearly made him laugh.

"Pretty strong," Hawai'i said as she looked around, "I usually don't finish the bottle."

"Got it, not *that* strong," America said, smiling slightly at the

confirmation that the drink was a lighter one.

"You're lucky I love you. I should throw you out of the house with the way you insult me so," Hawai'i said, rolling her eyes while she got a corkscrew out. She pulled out the cork with a loud pop and then handed it to America. "Just one drink, alright? So you don't feel lonely."

America smiled, taking the bottle with a grateful smile and a small laugh. While he was sure the drink wasn't strong, at least he had the whole bottle, so hopefully, it would be enough to get him drunk.

"You're impossible," James said, and America could practically hear the man's eye-roll, *"I'm going to check in and let everyone know you're getting drunk again.*

America then took a whiff of the bottle, a confused frown making its way across his face as he was unable to place what was in it.

"Where did you get this? What is this?" he asked.

"'Ōkolehao," Hawai'i said. "Made it a while back."

"You made it? You're *brewing* it?" America asked, dumbstruck. Out of all the things he expected from his sister, her making her own alcohol wasn't even on the list. "Hawai'i, I wouldn't expect that from you. And it's called *what*?"

"*Steel butt*. ʻŌkole hao. Not sure why it's called that. This liquor's been around as long as I have. And it's made pretty easy; you just need to–" Hawaiʻi cut off her explanation with a shrug, looking embarrassed, her voice becoming quiet. "On second thought, I am not telling you how to make this."

Hawaiʻi sighed, shaking her head, holding her hand out, presumably asking for the bottle. America tightened his grip on it. He *needed* this. He *needed* it. She couldn't take away the one thing that helped.

"I'm only taking a few sips. To check quality. Nothing more." Hawai'i said. America nodded and forced himself to let go of the bottle.

His hand was shaking.

Hawai‘i took the bottle and brought it to her lips. "Cheers."

Hawaii downed a swig of it, making a small face as she did so, and then handed the bottle to America, who nearly snatched it from his sister's hands, desperate for the cure that made everything better.

He then brought it to his lips, ready to take a massive swig, but as the liquor touched his lips, he began coughing, making a face as he did so. The liquor burned fiercely, and America briefly wondered if this was really something made for consumption.

Jesus Christ, that was strong. How did little Hawai‘i drink something like that and only make a face? America was glad James wasn't here to see that.

"I told you it was strong, Lika," Hawai'i said, shrugging as America let out a choked laugh, trying to catch his breath, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand.

She was a little shit.

"Strong? Wai, this is like drinking fire!" America laughed, eyes watering from the burn. "What is this, ninety proof?"

"A hundred twenty," Hawai'i said, shrugging.

"*One hundred twenty?*" America asked, incredulous. He needed to seriously reevaluate how he saw his sister and alcohol. "And you barely made a face. I'll hand it to you, Wai. You can drink."

Hawai‘i smiled at that, relaxing some.

"Then how about I take another sip?" she asked. Midely impressed and knowing now that he wouldn't need to drink the whole bottle to get drunk, America passed it back to her, letting Hawai‘i take another sip.

They sat there in relative silence, taking turns sipping from the bottle. Although Hawai‘i could drink the bottle without making a face, she clearly had no tolerance for it, as she began to get gigglier

and gigglier.

America, on the other hand, took the biggest sips he could, his shoulders tense, and gripped the bottle like his life depended on it every time it was in his hands. He could feel his thoughts begin to blur as the alcohol set in, a pleasant buzz setting it, numbing them.

"Lika... maybe you should... Don't want you to drain my supply. Are you alright?" Hawai‘i asked with a giggle, face flushed, a sure sign she was drunk.

"Don't worry about it, Wai," America said, his voice rough. "I'm fine. Just... needed a drink. That's all."

Hawai‘i looked as if she wanted to say something, but instead, she just took the bottle, taking another sip.

America's eyes narrowed as he watched her in concern. He wasn't sober, but compared to Hawai‘i, he might as well be. She was drinking far too much for someone who was already clearly drunk. If America knew anything about alcohol, it was how miserable too much of it made you.

"You sure you're not getting a little too much into it, Wai?" he asked, concerned. Maybe she could drink strong booze, but clearly not a lot of it. Hawai‘i simply took another sip, smiling.

"I'm fine, Lika. Really. Just..." She giggled again, a sound that was gentle and carefree, something he had not heard from her in a while, "Just a little... buzzed."

America couldn't help the grin that stretched across his face. Hawai‘i had always seemed so stressed and anxious at times, for one so carefree. It was nice seeing her relax. It reminded him—

It reminded him of New England Confederation.

America's grin faded as he took another sip, letting the alcohol burn its way down his throat.

"You remind me a lot of my daughter," America said, words slurring together.

"Hmm?" Hawai‘i asked, either not paying attention or too drunk to form words. America couldn't blame her for either. Sometimes it was better to forget.

"You remind me of New England. Happy and passionate. Carefree. And too eager to please Fa—Britain," America said, trying to swallow down his guilt. "I'm sorry."

His mind was drifting now, away from the sister beside him to the memories of the daughter he had lost. He vaguely knew he was crying as he begged for her forgiveness.

Hawai‘i leaned against him like she was trying to provide comfort, but the alcohol in her system seemed to inhibit her ability to process what he was saying.

America preferred that. He didn't want her to remember how broken he was.

The tears continued to slide down his face as Hawai‘i put a hand on his face. America winced, expecting a comment about the tears, but Hawai‘i just began giggling, muttering nonsense about his stars.

"Why do they move?" She asked, her words so slurred that America could barely make sense of them. At least she was remembering to speak English.

"I told you. We never made the places official. People make all sortsa shapes with the stars," America answered. His words were not as slurred as Hawai‘i's were, but they still slid out in mumbled sounds. Hawai‘i nodded.

"Why did...didja run into my fishpond?" she asked, crossing her arms, "I don't think my fish appreciated it all that much."

America laughed but didn't answer, as he wasn't too sure about the answer himself. He hoped Hawai‘i, in her drunken state, would simply forget the matter and leave it alone. He took another sip, letting the burn carry away his thoughts as the world began to grow blurrier around him.

He felt a weight against his side and looked over to see that Hawai‘i

had curled up beside him and fallen asleep. America smiled, head dropping to rest on top of Hawai‘i's.

He felt at peace.

So America let his eyes slide shut.

An Older Sister

Mass and Gin bonding, requested by just-a-birbo

Virginia hadn't expected the new colony.

She had been playing with her toy cat, the one that Uncle James had made for her, when the colony appeared, stumbling out of the woods, looking confused. Virginia had stood up to get her uncle when the new colony spotted her, eyes lighting up as he ran over.

"Hi!" he chirped, voice bright and cheerful, "I'm Plymouth!"

Plymouth looked weird. Instead of being dressed like the small, probably six-year-old child that he was, he instead looked more like a small man in his attire, wearing clothes that were just the littlest bit too big for him.

It was *adorable*.

"Hi," Virginia said, hugging her plush tighter, unsure of what she could say, "I'm Virginia."

Plymouth smiled, revealing that he was missing one of his front teeth, cheeks stretching to reveal dimples as his green eyes lit up in excitement.

He reminded Virginia of Poppy. The comparison made her chest hurt.

But unlike Poppy, Plymouth didn't try to pull her into a hug. Instead, he seemed to temper his excitement, trying to create a facade of being more mature than he was.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, ma'am," Plymouth said. It was so adorable to see him trying to act like an adult, all professional and mature. Virginia wanted to pick him up and pull him into a hug, but she knew most people didn't like to be touched without

warning, so she resisted the urge, offering Plymouth her hand instead.

"Father can't talk to you," Virginia began, "But I can take you to meet Uncle James if you would like."

Plymouth nodded and easily took her hand, his tiny one fitting perfectly in her own. Still clutching her plush close to her chest with her free hand, Virginia began walking to her house, where she knew her uncle had to be unless he was busy helping Father.

Unfortunately, it seemed the latter was true, and Uncle James was nowhere to be found.

"Where is he?" Plymouth asked. Virginia sighed.

"Uncle James...he likes to protect people. Sometimes...sometimes Father gets himself into trouble, so Uncle James helps him. He'll be back soon, and I'm sure he'll be happy to meet you," Virginia said. Plymouth nodded before looking around the house nervously, as if he was unsure of his place there, unsure of what he should do.

"I am sorry for my intru—" Plymouth began before Virginia cut off her newest little brother with a smile.

"That's alright," she said, "You're family. It's never an intrusion. We...we don't have a bed for you, though. The last colony hat was here...she...she's gone now, and since we were both little, we shared a bed."

"That's okay. I can...I can sleep on the floor until I...I fit it," Plymouth said. Virginia shook her head.

"No little brother of mine is sleeping on the floor. You can sleep with me or your uncle, okay?" Virginia said. Plymouth nodded, looking sheepish.

"You don't have too—"

"I want to," Virginia said before setting her plush on the chair that Uncle James had so lovingly crafted for them, letting Virginia and Popham sloppily carve their names into it.

Plymouth would have to, too. Family tradition.

"I'm sorry. I don't think I'm good at this," Plymouth said. Virginia gave her brother a gentle smile, holding out her arms for a hug.

"You don't have to be. We're all learning. Now, may I have a hug from my new brother?" she asked. Plymouth quickly pulled her into a hug, melting into her body, invisible stress dropping from his shoulders.

"You're warm," he muttered from where his face was buried in Virginia's shoulder. Virginia laughed.

"Thank you," she said before pulling away some, noticing how Plymouth's clothes had shifted to ones that were more appropriate for a child his age. Plymouth looked as if he didn't want to leave her grip, staying pressed against her side; just as the door to their house opened, Uncle James walked in with worry lines clear on his face.

"Uncle James!" Virginia called, catching her uncle's attention and watching his eyes widen as he spotted Plymouth, "I have a brother!"

"Well, look at that. Does this brother have a name?" Uncle James asked. Plymouth, suddenly looking nervous, pressed close against Virginia's side, burying his face in her skirts.

"He's tall," Plymouth whispered. Virginia knelt down to look her brother in the eyes, smiling reassuringly.

"He won't hurt you," Virginia said. "I promise."

Plymouth nodded, slowly turning to face Uncle James.

"It's nice to meet you," Plymouth finally said. The grin that split Uncle James' face was infectious.

"It's nice to meet you too."

Plymouth, deciding he had enough of socializing, then turned back to Virginia, burying his face into her side, crawling into her lap from where he had been sitting on the ground.

Virginia held Plymouth close to her. The small, newborn colony yawned before snuggling tighter into Virginia's grip. Virginia rubbed a gentle thumb across his cheek as he was slowly lulled to sleep by her breathing.

Her little brother was the most adorable thing Virginia had ever seen. He was so *small,* and a part of her soul thrummed with the urge to protect him, to keep him safe from anything that might want to harm him.

"Do you think he'll live long?" Uncle James asked, sitting down beside Virginia, staring at the small colony. Virginia pulled him closer, pressing her head to Plymouth's

"I hope so," she said.

Virginia was tired of losing people she came to love.

The Night Sky

This oneshot was a request on my oneshot request form! The requestor was anonymous, but I had such a fun time writing this oneshot as I was supposed to be paying attention in Spanish class.

San Marino was an old country. He was the son of the Roman Empire, for Christ's sake. He had seen so much. Empires rise and fall. Countries kill each other for power, money, and other stupid reasons.

He was overlooked because he was small, but he was probably one of the most experienced countryhumans around.

It takes a lot to shake a person who has lived that long,

That's why San Marino was so stunned by how badly light pollution had shaken him.

The stars had always been a comfort for San Marino. While he was not interested in going to them, as many younger countries were, they had provided him with their consistent presence throughout his entire life.

San Marino knew the location of so many stars by heart.

So, of course, he noticed when they started to vanish.

It was a slow process, one he didn't realize at first.

San Marino lived in the mountains. While he had his city, his country was small, and cities were...so foreign to San Marino now. He preferred his countryside.

So, San Marino didn't really notice until he was visiting Vatican City, the only other person than him who really spoke Latin as a

first language. It was how San Marino practiced speaking it nowadays, as more older countries died and were replaced by ones without an interest in learning Latin.

San Marino knew it might be better to give up his hold on his long-dead first language, but he was a sentimental old man. He would cling to it for as long as he could.

"Vatican, where are the stars?" San Marino had asked after the sun began to set, but no stars began to appear, the sky remaining an eerie blue.

"What do you mean?" Vatican City said, confusion overtaking his face as he looked up at the sky.

"The stars...why aren't they coming out?" San Marino asked, trying to stamp down on his panic. San Marino knew his age made him perhaps a little more superstitious than most, but the fact that the stars were not shining on the heart of Christianity had to be an omen.

This could only be a bad sign. Why wasn't Vatican City worried about this?

They were *gone*.

One of the few constants San Marino had for the past two thousand-odd years was *gone*.

"Stars..." Vatican City began before trailing off as if he was unsure of how to explain himself.

"Vatican City, is this a bad omen?" San Marino asked. He had been excited about the United Nations, about the fact that the others were at least making an attempt to get along with each other, not to kill each other, to allow San Marino some consistent company, but if this were a sign that the world was about to go to Hell again, well...

Well, San Marino wouldn't exactly be surprised. Disappointed, sure, but not surprised.

"What? No? It looks like this in most cities!" Vatican City explained. San Marino stared at him in shock. What did he mean, it was like this in other cities? Why were the stars gone from cities?

"What?" San Marino questioned. Vatican City shrugged.

"It's something to do with the lights that are in cities now. I think...I think it's called light pollution, like all the light down here obscures what you can see up there," Vatican City said, pointing up at the sky. San Marino's jaw dropped.

"That's horrible!" San Marino exclaimed. Humanity had taken a lot from him; that was what happened when you lived as long as he did, but they had taken the stars from him, too?

The stars were so high above, so far away, that San Marino had always thought of them as the one thing that could never be taken from him.

They were his constant for a reason.

"It's not that bad. We don't need them to navigate anymore, and it's not like it's hurting anyone. There are worse forms of pollution," Vatican City said nonchalantly. San Marino shook his head, horror flooding through him.

"That's horrible, Vatican. Maybe it's not needed for navigation anymore, but people deserve to see the sky. It's a part of the world, of the environment, and they've been there for longer than any of us have been or will be. We can't just...we can't pretend like it's not a bad thing to cut off the stars," San Marino explained.

"It...It's not ideal, but you forget it could be worse," Vatican City said, looking a little bit annoyed as if he didn't understand why San Marino wanted to see it as a bad thing. San Marino snorted in annoyed amusement.

"It could be a lot better, too," San Marino commented, looking back up at the horrifically empty sky.

It still felt like a bad omen.

"It's just the stars in cities, San Marino. They'll exist everywhere else," Vatican City said. San Marino shook his head.

"Pollution won't stay confined because you think it will. Cities are only growing larger, and even towns have lights like these," San Marino began, "I hate to think of a generation that grows up without stars."

With those final words, San Marino stood up and brought himself back to his home, where the stars were normal, still visible, not hidden by the lights that reflected how quickly mankind had grown.

Things had changed a lot. In the past fifty or so years, technology had advanced quicker than San Marino had ever seen before. It was startlingly fast, an advancement the likes of which he had never seen before.

He knew it wasn't all going to be for the betterment of humanity. The advancement in weapons technology and the creation of chemical and nuclear weapons had shown him that, but he never thought that humanity's technology would cut them off from the stars, a source of stories, of guidance, a light in the darkness of night.

That light was fading. How many humans wouldn't know what a star was?

San Marino didn't know.

And he hated that.

The Independent Colony

Greenland and USA during WW2 requested by written-by-an-idiot

"I can't stay for long," the United States said, stomping snow off his book before entering Greenland's house, "This is just meant to be a small stop before I continue my way to Britain."

"I understand," Greenland said, "I know everything is going to be busy with you joining the war."

"Do you think you are going to fight? You've been acting pretty independently since Denmark fell, and you're my protectorate, and since I am now at war...well, some of my people expect you too," United States asked. Greenland shook his head.

"I still remain in contact with Denmark, even though we are ignoring her orders, and based on our conversations, I believe that if I get involved more than I have, Germany will retaliate against her," Greenland explained. It was strange hearing Denmark sound so...scared. He had known her for a long time, and very little could shake her.

Greenland didn't like how she sounded. He had been grateful when United States had helped intervene and prevent Canada and United Kingdom from taking control of his land and making him a protectorate.

Canada held the bulk of his Father's free forces, and his Father was now living in the United Kingdom, as his country was under occupation, but Greenland still worried that a British or Canadian occupation of his land would result in his Father trying to take him back, even though that land dispute had just been settled.

"I'm sorry I couldn't keep you out of the war," United States said. Greenland snorted in amusement.

"Don't be. You tried to stay neutral, too. The Axis pulled us into the war, not you," Greenland reasoned.

"I know. I just...they don't have much reason to attack you, not yet, with Britain still in the war, but weather data is a monopoly both sides want, and you are a great location for weather stations," United States said. Greenland smiled.

"I know, but trust me, I know how to take care of myself. I am a very old countryhuman. I have survived worse. I'll survive this," he said. Greenland had been a colony his entire life, and most countries, because of his status, forgot how old he was. Colonies were expected to be young, never over three hundred.

Greenland was almost seven hundred. He was a product of an era few remembered, and even fewer personifications survived. He had known about the existence of the Americas long before the Europeans did. The native peoples there were his family, after all.

Greenland thrived when he was left alone and underestimated. It was sweet to see the United States worry so much (although that could be because of United States' attempt to purchase his land when he adopted Danish West Indies), but Greenland knew he would be fine in the end.

Greenland worried more about Denmark, who was completely at their enemy's mercy.

"Then I wish you the best of luck," United States said. Greenland nodded his head.

"The same to you. You have the harder job. When...please make sure Denmark and Father are alright," Greenland then asked. He knew the information he was being provided was warped, if not outright a lie.

"I will. You have my word."

Autonomous Menaces

Wales and the other kingdoms annoying Britain, requested by an Anonymous person on my oneshot request form (which you can check out in the first chapter). This isn't quite the request, but I thought it was fun.

"I don't know why I spend any time with you guys," Northern Ireland signed, looking incredibly annoyed.

"North, you barely talk to us," Scotland signed. Northern Ireland gave him a deadpan stare.

"And this is why."

"Come on, Northie, we're going to make Britain more comfortable with himself! You would love it if he calmed down a little, wouldn't you?" Wales signed a wide grin on his face.

"Why isn't England here then?" Northern Ireland asked.

"Because England doesn't know how to have any fun," Wales signed, ignoring the small huff of laughter from Scotland.

"England has common sense," Northern Ireland responded.

"No, he doesn't. Trust me, I've known him for longer," Scotland chimed in before standing up, a wide grin on his face, "Come on. Time to make Britain regret what he did."

Northern Ireland sighed.

"I'm never coming over when you say there is an emergency again," she signed.

"Come on, it's not that bad," Scotland signed, his grin never fading as he stepped out of the room. Northern Ireland turned to Wales.

"How did I let you talk me into this?"

"I didn't. I blackmailed you." Northern Ireland nodded sagely.

"Ah, that's right. You're dead to me." Wales laughed.

"Come on, admit it, you want to annoy Britain just as much as we do," Wales signed. Northern Ireland stared at Wales.

"Yes, but not like this," Northern Ireland signed before crossing her arms. Wales grinned.

"I'll make sure no one has footage."

Northern Ireland uncrossed her arms.

"Deal."

Estranged Son

Britain hadn't realized it had happened at first.

It had been a long day for him and the other allied powers in London as they argued endlessly over battle plans for the attack on mainland Europe. America, in particular, looked exhausted, having come down from further north early in the morning, as he had been expecting his troops the day before.

Dark bags hung under his eyes, and he yawned every so often, blinking sleep from his eyes.

They didn't get much done anyway.

When the meeting ended, Britain invited America into his office, where there was a couch where he could rest. Britain knew his estranged son hadn't stopped since he was attacked by Japan, and a small part of him hoped to endear himself enough to America to finally heal the cracks that had been formed all those years ago.

"I'm alright, Britain. I need to check up with the Pacific front," America had said, still blinking sleep from his eyes, looking as if he was about to pass out any minute. Britain had dropped the colder, harsher demeanor of an empire under threat and asked again.

"You look dead on your feet. Your people can survive long enough for you to take care of yourself."

America had listened that time, and the two of them sat side by side as Britain focused on the newspaper in front of him, wanting to give America his space.

Britain hadn't realized his son was asleep until his head was lolling on Britain's shoulder.

Britain smiled softly at his son, who was snoring softly, glasses

askew, before removing them gently, pausing as America shifted slightly, face twisting with worry as small murmurs escaped him.

"Shhh, you're okay," Britain whispered as he set America's glasses down, running his hand through America's hair. America quieted, sinking deeper into Britain's side.

Britain picked up his left arm from where it was being crushed by America, lifting it so he could wrap it around America's shoulders, pulling his son in close. America stirred again, dark eyes opening to stare up at Britain, confused.

It reminded Britain so painfully of when America was younger when they were still father and son, colony and empire.

It was strange how much so many things had changed between them, and yet this moment was exactly the same as it would have been over two hundred years ago.

"Go back to sleep," Britain murmured and, as if on instinct, pressed a small kiss to the top of America's head. His son burrowed further into Britain's side, and his breathing deepened again.

Britain could tell he was smiling as he used his right hand to gently brush hair out of America's face. His expression was smooth and peaceful, and America didn't seem at all bothered by the fact that he was sleeping in full military regalia.

America had definitely needed a break.

And to be honest, Britain did too.

Britain had been getting very little sleep since France was invaded and even less since the Blitz and all of the refugee nations taking shelter in London. He had been working to help his governments, their governments and hold out against the Germans in a war that was draining him.

Britain was exhausted, and as he sat there, his son's warm presence at his side, he could feel sleep calling for him.

"Brit—" Britain then heard Wales ask, prompting him to open his

eyes (*when did he close them?*), revealing Wales standing in the doorway, mouth open, staring at Britain and America in what Britain could only assume was shock. Britain pulled his son a little bit closer.

"When did this happen?" Wales then asked, his voice dropping to a whisper.

"He's exhausted. He was falling asleep during the meeting, so I asked him if he wanted to take a small break in my office, and before I knew it, he was asleep," Britain explained. Wales smiled, walking over and moving America's glasses and Britain's newspaper to the desk.

"Never thought I'd see the day," Wales muttered, a fond look on his face as he looked at the two of them before that familiar mischievous light appeared.

"Wales, whatever you're thinking, no," Britain hissed, but it was too late, as the chimera was already leaving the room. Britain, slowly being buried under America's weight, was trapped and unable to move.

Britain sighed. Hopefully, whatever Wales had in mind wasn't too bad.

But you could never tell with that man.

After a few minutes, Wales came back holding a camera.

"Wales, no," Britain immediately said in a hushed whisper, leaning forward as he tried to express his anger without throwing America to the floor.

"Don't act like you don't want one. I can see it in your eyes," Wales said, his bright green eyes boring into Britain's.

Britain backed down.

"America wouldn't want one," Britain argued, even though he knew it was weak and that Wales would see right through it.

"America wouldn't have to have one. This can just be for you. Or if you don't want it, I'll take it 'cause I'm taking a picture either way," Wales said as he lifted the camera. Britain rolled his eyes but didn't protest further as Wales took a few photos, causing America to let out a soft murmur and bury himself further into Britain's side.

"Shh," Britain said, not wanting America to wake up now, knowing his son would be mad at him.

"Still doesn't sleep well, does he?" Wales asked. Britain shook his head.

"I don't think he's slept much since he was attacked," Britain theorized. Of course, he had a new Hawai‘i territory to worry about, and he was probably worried about his child there.

"You haven't either," Wales commented before lowering the camera. "I'll leave you be."

"You better not let anyone else barge in here. He needs the rest," Britain said. Wales smiled, something fond in his face.

"Of course. And Britain?"

"Yes?"

"Try to get some sleep too. You need a break as well."

Britain nodded as Wales left the room, closing his eyes and resting his head on top of his son's.

Sleep did sound nice.

Past Accents

South Carolina and Australia on their accent swapping. Requested by an Anon on the oneshot request form. I also wrote this while crying over the Puppet History Meteorite song so yeah.

"Do you ever still use your American accent?" South Carolina asked one day. "Or do you not remember how to do it anymore?"

"I remember. And sometimes. Uncle Ame's people can be really annoying about mine. 'Course, that doesn't stop me from using Aussie slang," Australia responded before shooting South Carolina a confused look. "Why?"

"I don't know. Just thinking about the past, I guess," South Carolina said with a small sigh.

"People getting to you again?" Australia asked. While both of them were grateful to be out now, that didn't mean the comments about their gender hurt any less. Especially when your very existence as a countryhuman was seen as political.

"No, not that. I just...was thinking about when I came out. You were the first person who knew, or at least the first person I told. And using your accent...it took some of the focus off what I had just said. And...I...I dunno. I knew it wasn't your intention, but it was strange," South Carolina explained. Australia chucked.

"I had a similar thing with Father. I think a small part of him was always hurt that an American state knew before him. 'Course he thought it was Cali," Australia said. South Carolina gave him a confused look.

"Why?"

"We wrote letters. It was the only state Father knew I knew. Guess

that took some of the heat from you," Australia said with a small smile. South Carolina laughed.

"Thanks, Aussie," she said, "Even if it wasn't on purpose."

Australia smiled back.

"Just doing my job as your favorite cousin," Australia declared.

"Well, I wouldn't go that far," South Carolina joked.

"Hey!" South Carolina laughed.

"Don't worry. I don't think anyone can beat you, Aussie. Hard to find someone with the connection that we have." Australia's smile turned softer, more genuine.

"Thanks South. I don't know how I would have come out without you being there for me."

"Ditto." South Carolina said, pulling him into a hug.

Australia returned it eagerly.

After Death

How Armenia got his gunshot scar, requested by an Anon on my oneshot request form. Written so quickly because I had just done his physical description on my website.

Armenian SSR woke with a start.

He was lying in a medical tent, head aching and weakness in his bones.

What had happened?

The last thing he remembered...he was with the 409th Rifle Division. They were fighting the Germans in Ukrainian SSR's land...but after that, his memories ended suddenly.

Armenian SSR didn't remember any pain, or being injured, or anything. He had been saying something to another soldier, and then the memory ended. Armenian SSR put a hand to his head as if he could force the memory to come to him.

But nothing came.

Armenian SSR slowly lifted himself off the bed, sitting up. He wasn't in any pain, and he didn't feel injured, so why was he in the medical tent?

"You're back!" A nurse then exclaimed, staring at Armenian SSR in shock. Armenian SSR looked down at his hands to see that he was in country form.

He...he was in human form last he remembered.

"What...happened?" Armenian SSR then asked, finally finding his voice. It was rough and grated on the ears, sounding as if he hadn't drunk anything in days.

"You were shot. One of your men was able to drag you to safety,"

The nurse explained. Armenian SSR nodded, hand still pressed against his head, brows furrowing in confusion.

"Then...why do I feel no pain? Why are there no bandages on me?" Armenian SSR asked. That didn't make sense. Then, a horrifying thought occurred to him. Had he been captured somehow? Was this all an elaborate trick? Armenian SSR straightened himself out, ready to fight just in case.

"You were shot in the chest. By the time you reached us, you..." The nurse trailed off, as if unable to finish her statement, as Armenian SSR relaxed against the bed.

He had been killed.

Well, that at least explained the missing memories.

Armenian SSR looked back down at himself, shakily removing his shirt to reveal a new scar over his chest, one that glowed softly in the dim light.

He had died. He had died, and he didn't even remember it.

Armenian SSR felt sick.

How could he just not...remember death?

Although he wasn't sure if he would rather remember it or not.

"Will I be sent back out to fight?" Armenian SSR asked.

"I'm not sure," the nurse said. "Just rest for now. Please."

Armenian SSR nodded and leaned back into the bed.

Armenian SSR had died.

He wasn't sure if he was grateful that he had forgotten.

Estranged Brothers

Something about North Korea, requested by an anon on my oneshot form, and the idea to do the Olympics coming from geisterland

Korea wouldn't say that he was close to his brother.

He wished he were, and he, of course, tried to be, but war and the ever-present reality that one of them would have to die in order to grant their people the unified country they deserved made things...awkward at best.

But things were getting better. Tensions were cooling, and they had been able to talk more.

And today was the summary of those waning tensions, proof that it wasn't just a temporary thing.

Korea and his brother's Olympic athletes were going to march together during the opening ceremony. While Korea had more athletes than his brother, that didn't erase the significance of the moment.

"I wish we could march with them, don't you?" Korea asked. Northern Han smiled slightly, a faint glimmer of emotion that was quickly hidden.

"I do. But we aren't allowed. It would be fun. Add more proof that we want to get along," Northern Han said. Korea nodded.

"It still makes a very clear point. And maybe us having our flags there takes away from that, as they're using the unification flag and not ours," Korea said.

"Do you think, when unification is over with, and one of us is gone, that whoever remains has the unification flag?" Northern Han

asked.

"I don't know. I think...I like my flag, but I think I would maybe prefer that one. A new start for our people. A flag that isn't stained by war and bitterness, just this," Korea said, gesturing out to where their athletes stood together, holding a sign that didn't say "Republic of Korea" or "Democratic People's Republic of Korea," but simply just Korea.

The name that both Korea and his brother called themselves, something they both knew, was just an attempt to pretend as if they were going to become the unified Korea.

"Yeah, that would be nice, wouldn't it? Too bad our flags aren't as close as East Germany's and West Germany's were. They mixed theirs nicely," Northern Han said, something wistful in his eyes.

"They did," Korea said, thinking about Vietnam. She had completely erased her son's flag when she took her place as the unified Vietnam. Korea didn't want that to happen to his brother or his people. There was enough resentment between them to make that a bad idea. Neither of them wanted to force unification. It had been long enough to show that it wouldn't work, but peace...that would be nice.

"Do you think we'll have unified teams next time?" Northern Han asked, breaking Korea from his thoughts.

"I...hope so. But I don't know. Both Germanys succeeded in it because they never had a state of war, only tension and refusing to acknowledge each other," Korea said.

"Yeah, but we're brothers. Our people are all Koreans. I'm sure that something can be worked out. We want to get along," Northern Han said. Korea frowned.

"If it was just us in charge of it, I'm sure it would. But we don't make that choice," Korea said. Northern Han sighed, something heavy and sad.

"You're right. Do you think this war could have ended sooner if we

had a bigger say in things?" Northern Han asked.

"Do you want to be the unified Korea?" Korea asked in way of an answer. Northern Han was silent for a few moments, the weight of his answer, the weight of their war, the weight of the fact that both of them wanted to be Korea, and neither of them would give in until they had no other choice, hanging between them.

"It would be nice if we could give them a unified country," Northern Han then said. It was an answer enough.

"Yeah. It would be," Korea said, looking down at their united athletes, at what the future could be if things worked out, at what he knew both he and his brother hoped for.

"At least we have this," Northern Han said. Korea let out a small laugh.

"Yeah, at least we do."

Canada's Cold War

The Gouzenko Affair, unofficially requested by beaversinplaid

Canada had, perhaps foolishly, hoped that the end of the Second World War would be the end of his never-ending string of headache-inducing incidents.

Even since he began confined to a wheelchair and, therefore, unable to serve in the war, Canada became more involved in the logistics of war, something that was guaranteed to give him a headache eventually.

The Second World War had promised to be the end of that headache.

Then, Igor Gouzenko defected from the Soviet Union and began to reveal the existence of a spy ring within Canada, one that was using Canada to gain access not only to Canadian information but also to use Canada's relationship with his father and...*America* to gain information on the both of them

Spies in his country were not a new thing to Canada, but the allegations came at such a time that Canada was roped into "helping" the investigation.

Which didn't make much sense, considering they were investigating a spy ring, and keeping their countryhuman out of it was probably better if they wanted to be subtle about it. However, despite his reservations, Canada would do his job.

He was a good countryhuman. He would help his people.

Even if Canada just wanted to reunite with his children and his other provinces and then sleep for eight hours straight for the first time since the Second World War began.

The universe always liked screwing him over.

"Do we know why Gouzenko defected?" Canada asked, rubbing at his forehead. Maybe if he faked having an issue with his oxygen tank, he could be freed from this mess.

Actually, that would cause a whole other host of issues, but it was nice to pretend.

"We aren't sure yet, but we still need to look into the information he provided more and investigate his claims," The man in front of him said. Canada nodded.

"Okay. Should I inform the provinces of this spy ring?" Canada asked. His father had been told, so Uncle England, Uncle Wales, and Uncle Scotland had most likely been informed as well. He would have assumed Northern Ireland had been told, but she stayed out of things like that, her deafness keeping her from the life of a countryperson.

"No. We want as few people to know of this as possible so we can ensure the investigation isn't compromised," The man explained. Canada gave him a deadpan expression.

"Sir, the provinces are my provinces. They aren't fickle like humans. They're not going to tell humans about this, and they won't give the information to the Soviets. I understand your paranoia, but they deserve to know because they can be of help," Canada explained.

"We cannot ensure that some of them don't have sympathies towards the Soviet Union, or at least toward communists in general," The man said. Canada sighed.

Dealing with humans who were insistent on putting their beliefs about people onto countryhumans whose lives were tied to their land and people and acting as if a countryhuman was even capable of betraying their people was so—

Canada cut off that thought.

His people were just trying to protect him. He had to remember that.

"I need to at least tell Ontario. It's his province, and he deserves to

know about the spy ring. Especially since I have health issues and might not be able to help all the time," Canada explained.

While there was nothing that could be done to improve his breathing or leg strength anymore, Canada sometimes had bad days with breathing, where talking was harder, and it was easier to stay home.

"Okay, Ontario can be informed, but no more," The man said, ending the meeting. Canada exhaled slowly, glad it was over.

He was still going to tell the rest of his provinces.

Of Mothers and Mother Figures

Jersey wasn't expecting a visit, especially not to her house in her land. While she was, of course, close with her sister, brother, and her brothers' descendants, they tended to spend more time together in the Land In-Between as opposed to the human world, especially after England's...breakdown a few years ago.

People didn't come to the home of the tiny islands of the Bailiwick of Jersey.

So Jersey was curious as to who it could be.

Opening the door, she was greeted by the sight of her great-nephew (it was easier to call him that, with England's adoption, Britain being a replacement, and then never-ending family drama surrounding America and his father) standing at the door, shifting nervously, a small smile on his face.

"Bouônjour, Tante Jèrri," America began (because none of the other alters called her aunt), his Jèrriais unsteady, as if he had tried to memorize a few phrases before coming to her door, "Can I speak with you?"

Jersey smiled, stepping aside to let her nephew in.

"Of course. You know my door is always open to you. All of you," Jersey said. America smiled, eyes softening as the nervousness seemed to fade, instantly becoming more at ease as he entered her home.

"Did you know?" America asked, jumping straight into business. Jersey sighed.

"I had suspicions, but I could never prove anything, and I never knew enough about how colonies were born to really understand if you would have had a mother or not," Jersey said before frowning,

"I don't think England and Britain had the right to hide it from you."

Learning that Britain had lied to his children about their parentage in order to convince them that they were destined to be white and to scare them into being afraid of the native cultures was so unabashedly Britain, and yet so terrible as well.

It was one thing to want to have a handle on your children, especially as an empire. It was another to keep parents from their children and teach the children to attack their parents. To teach children that their parents had no right to exist.

There was something more cruel about that.

Although Jersey was no innocent woman. Tiny, gentle, and nurturing her hands were, they were still stained with so much blood.

Jersey let it happen. Jersey hadn't been an innocent party. But she wished she could have mitigated the damage she could now see in her nephew's eyes.

America frowned as well, something flickering in his eyes. Jersey softened.

"Let's have a set. A conversation like this shouldn't happen in the foyer," Jersey said, taking America's hand and squeezing it gently. America smiled at her, but it was unsteady, doubts still plaguing his mind.

Jersey wondered why he had come to her. America had his states, he had Ireland, America had so many other people who had supported him much more consistently than her. While they still talked, Jersey wondered why he had picked her for this conversation.

Was it because she was England's sister?

Or was it because there was something more about their relationship that Jersey hadn't seen before?

America sat down on the couch, immediately burying his face in his

hands, a deep set of tension in his shoulders.

"Why didn't Father think he could tell me?" America asked, something heavy in his voice—and in his words. America tended to call Britain by his name more often than not. Only in vulnerable times did he go back to calling the man "dad." But Father? The moniker Britain had forced all his children to call him?

America only called him that when something was deeply wrong, when he was so caught up in the past, it was like he never escaped at all.

"I don't know. I think, in his own way, he was trying to protect you," Jersey said. Britain was never good at expressing emotions or care, but Jersey had seen the way the non-white colonies were treated. She had seen the way mixed-race people were treated.

Britain protected them from that.

Even if he protected them from very little else.

"James thinks it was about control," America confessed, lifting his head from his hands. Jersey sighed.

"As great as it would be to think that Britain only had good intentions, that probably was another reason, yes. Britain wouldn't have been able to stand any more of his colonies turning on him and his ideas for the native peoples he saw as lesser," Jersey said. It was the ugly truth about her nephew that she didn't like to confront.

That didn't stop it from being true.

"And us having native parents makes the threat of us being disloyal more real," America said, something...hurt in his voice.

"Britain based the way he saw you on two people—Jamaica, who was Spanish and well aware of his other parent, and Ireland. Ireland had been a country, and with the taste of freedom stolen from him, he would always fight to taste it again. Jamaica was a good colony, but there was a sense of unease about his loyalties, and conflicts with Spain did not end when he was given over. You

and your siblings, I think, were, in his eyes, a chance at loyal colonies," Jersey said.

She could never fully understand why Britain made the choices he did.

She could only guess.

"James says he went too far. That I'm lucky not to remember it all," America said, voice soft. Jesery's eyes grew distant as she thought back to all the times she had to help tend to America's bruises and nurse him back to health.

"Britain was always good at taking it too far," Jersey eventually said.

"I would have been good," America said, something pleading in his voice, "Father could have told me. I would have been good."

Jersey's heart broke at the sight, how almost two hundred years later, Britain could still leave him broken and crying. How no matter how much therapy he got or apologies he gave, the harm he had done to all of his colonies, especially the ones most closely related to him, would never go away.

Jersey placed a gentle hand on America's shoulder, rubbing it gently.

"I know, I know," Jersey whispered gently.

"We would have been good. We had been abandoned before, and we would have been good to make sure that didn't happen again," America said; something haunted in his eyes as if this were a guilt, a question he had been carrying for years.

"Abandoned?" Jersey asked, confused.

"We don't know what happened! I thought we were good, but maybe we weren't. We thought we were good, but then we got left behind, and it was...so lonely. Sorry. All the memories from then are so fuzzy...I'm sorry. This has brought back a lot of stuff...we...I forgot," America said, his voice becoming slightly panicked.

"Meri," Jersey said, keeping her voice soothing and gentle, trying to calm her nephew's panic. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know why I was abandoned back in Roanoke. But I tried to be good so Fa—so Britain wouldn't have a reason to abandon me again when I became Jamestown. And...did he never think I could be good?" Jersey froze.

"What do you mean, Roanoke?" Jersey asked. America had been born as Jamestown. Everyone knew that.

But if they had been wrong...

America would have been left alone, most certainly only surviving with the help of his native peoples, and then being brought back into Britain's household? And now, learning he had a mother he never knew, a mother who was most likely the personification of the people who had helped him live...no wonder he was struggling with this.

"I was Ronaoke, then Father abandoned me because I wasn't good enough. I lived, but everything was fuzzy until Jamestown. Then I was back with Father. But he was angry. I wasn't good enough. And I wanted to be with him. I didn't want to be alone. So, I tried to be good enough. I tried so *hard*," America said, voice breaking.

"I know you did," Jersey began, "But America, I thought you were born as Jamestown. Not Roanoke."

"I...I know that's a misconception a lot of people have. But I...I never really corrected anyone, so I guess I can't blame you for that," America said, looking really tired. Jersey shook her head.

"No, America, Britain told me you were Jamestown. I don't think he knew you were Roanoke. I think he thought you were a brand-new colony. There's a headstone for Roanoke in the family plot," Jersey said. America froze, looking up at Jersey, his expression plainly showing that his worldview had been shattered.

"What?" America exclaimed, looking distressed.

"He thought Roanoke had died. He didn't...he didn't abandon you,"

Jersey began, "And the fact that your native peoples may or may not have allowed you to survive until you became Jamestown didn't affect his decision."

"So...it was always about control," America said, voice quiet and hollow. Jersey put her arm around his waist before slowly pulling him into a hug.

"I'm sorry," Jersey said, "You didn't deserve to be left for dead as Roanoke, and you didn't deserve to grow up thinking that you would be abandoned and left for dead if you weren't good enough for him. You didn't deserve that."

America let out a small, broken noise and began crying.

They remained like that for a while, with America leaning against her side, trying to do his best to cry silently, as if he didn't want to admit to the show of vulnerability.

Eventually, the tears began to fade.

"Sorry," America whispered.

"It's okay. It's been a lot," Jersey said. She didn't know what it was like for America to find this out, but she knew it wasn't easy. America deserved the chance to cry over what could have been.

"Yeah. It has. Thanks for always being there for me, Mo—Aunt Jersey," America said, flushing red before turning away and pulling out of the hug.

Jersey was stunned. It wasn't a bad thing—far from it! She was happy that she had made enough of an impact in America's life for him to hold her in such high regard.

"You're welcome, fis," Jersey said. "It's been wonderful to be a part of your life."

With that, she gently pulled him into another hug.

The Dragon's Rebirth

Flags, like memories, were a fickle thing.

Wales was no stranger to how one's flag could change, even if he had not had memories of the man he was before guiding and teaching him. Wales knew that flags were more closely tied to the countrypeople than many believed, as what was law and what was *theirs* was not always the same.

So when Owain Glyndŵr's rebellion, his war against England, began, Wales expected a change in flag to occur.

After all, the flag he currently had was the one England saw as the flag of *his* principality, and Wales knew a new flag would better convince the man that Wales was going to become his own kingdom once more.

Wales wanted his kingdom. He had been one before, albeit as Gwynedd and not as Wales, but he could be a kingdom again.

So when Owain Glyndŵr declared himself Prince of Wales and raised the banner of *Y Ddraig Aur*, Wales braced himself for the change, for the return of the features he had lost to Normandy so long ago.

Wales' world went dark as the shock of the change forced him into unconsciousness.

Wales awoke a few hours later with a new weight on his back and head. He could feel the new limbs, uncomfortable and strange, yet undeniably a part of him, and was quick to stretch them out, trying to get a feel for them.

They felt so... familiar.

Wales...he remembered flying. He remembered teaching someone how to fly. He remembered a lot and yet so little; the memories

faded and fuzzy from time and death.

Wales remembered flying, but that didn't mean he knew how to fly.

The wings were gold as opposed to the red he once had. They were shiny and reflective, and...they weren't the same.

Neither was he.

Wales put his hands to his ears, feeling how they had changed from normal human ones back to the dragon ears he once held so long ago.

When Wales had been reborn, his lion traits only manifested in claws on hands and feet, teeth, and a mane.

His body had not changed; neither had his ears, nor had he been given a tail.

Wales pulled his tail in front of him, flicking it, the scales shimmering as he did so.

Did God know he was going to regain his dragon traits someday and prevent Wales from getting the ears and tail of a lion in preparation for this moment? Or was the lack of those lion traits a reminder of how he died, prioritizing protection and offense?

Wales didn't remember how he died. But he had seen Gwynedd's body—his body. The throat had been torn out.

Wales...he thought that the dragon trait would make him feel more like the man he had been before.

They did, in a way, but they also felt so different.

Gold, instead of red.

Gold, something that reminded Wales of people he had lost, people he hadn't *known* but *knew,* memories of friends long gone echoing in his mind.

At least they aren't the color of blood, blood like that room you were

created in, blood from your body, your blood covering your hands, oh, God, what were you? Were you truly Wales or just a—

Wales wondered if he had fire. He didn't know for sure. He remembered, before, that his fire could run out, that it was stronger when he gave it time to build up. Wales knew he would have to wait a little to see if he had his fire back.

Wales would have to wait and see. But for now, he felt...more complete.

The traits and the familiar coloring seemed to trigger some things, as a strange feeling of familiarity filled him, as if the memories he was missing were just out of reach, not close enough to grab, but close enough that Wales knew they were there, just out of reach.

If only his memories could be returned.

Then, he could truly be whole.

But Wales had been trying to achieve that goal for two hundred years.

He wished it were easier, but he knew it was not.

Wales was Gwynedd, and Gwynedd was Wales, but there was still so much that separated them.

And yet Wales was undeniably still Gwynedd. He looked at England and could see the child he had once been. He looked at the people around him and saw who they were, while they did not see him for who he had been.

He was Wales to them, and Gwynedd was dead and buried, one of the remains from a time England tried to rip away and destroy, a time he wanted to bury, both at the orders of his so-called mother, and of the pain that made him the angry little lion he was.

Wales wondered if this would have been easier if he hadn't had the memories of before.

Maybe it would have been easier to have just been Wales.

Stretching out the wings that felt like his own but didn't match his memories, looked as if they belonged to another, Wales only felt that was more true.

He knew his life would have been easier if he were not the amnesiac, reused soul of Gwynedd.

Wales missed the memories he didn't have. He only wished that he could get them all back soon.

Maybe, just maybe, it would erase the doubts he had.

But Wales knew who he was, even if others did not want to see it.

Maybe with some of the traits he lost, Wales could be seen as Gwynedd again.

Although he wasn't sure if that was going to be a good thing or not.

Familial

Cornwall didn't know what Wales was to her. She knew they had to be family, as all personifications in their islands were, but with Wales...it was hard to trace.

Replacements were hard to understand in general, however. Born of death they were, it often seemed as if they ran on a different understanding of the world to everyone else.

But death changed people. Cornwall shouldn't have been surprised by that.

After all, she had seen people change before.

Wales was different to Gwynedd. Where Gwynedd was more outspoken and not easily cowed, Wales was quieter, more subdued, but even then, intelligence gleamed in his eyes.

Cornwall shouldn't have been surprised when Wales turned to blackmail. Wales had been *killed* even if he didn't remember it, even if he was a new countryhuman, and the traces of that linger.

But blackmail would not cow everyone. Not everyone would take that sort of threat lying down.

Wales was bright, there was no dying that.

But the circumstances of his creation left him with flaws.

Cornwall was going to make him a sword.

Blacksmithing had started off as a skill she learned out of boredom, something that was bound to happen when you lived with no chance of death in sight. As the world moved forward and Cornwall became... lesser, at least in the eyes of those with power, it became a way to make money and a way to help.

She enjoyed blacksmithing.

Cornwall would not pretend to know Wales well. He held things close to his chest, haunted by memories that were not his own.

Still, she took care to craft the sword for him to ensure it would fit him well.

If he were willing, Cornwall would teach him to use it.

Gwynedd was good with a sword.

Despite what he claimed, Wales was not Gwynedd.

She wondered why Wales was so quick to claim they were.

A Moment of Reflection (Soviet America AU)

This AU was made by @universal-casey on Tumblr. This is her AU, but I have just been doing some writing for it. Check her out! Anyway, English is in bold!

America didn't remember much after Soviet Union died.

He remembered feeling triumphant, feeling angry, feeling sad, and scared, and hurt, and so many things at once.

Then there was black. And America felt nothing at all.

When he woke up again, he was in a hospital room, surrounded by family and people he once called friends.

America was quick to shut his eyes. It was too much. It was all too much. He couldn't face them all, not after everything that had happened to him.

Not after everything, the failure, the shame, the hurt.

Everything hurt.

But he still listened as murmured voices spoke with the doctors, hearing words like "malnutrition" and "chronic abuse."

America wished he could fade away into the darkness again.

There was a hand running through his hair, a gentle, repetitive motion that soothed America.

Logically, America knew he had to be safe.

He was still so scared.

But he was so tired, and the movement of the hand was so soothing, and despite his fear, America quickly slipped back into the darkness.

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America awoke again to quiet murmurs. They sounded so...so far away. America tried to pull his eyes open to see what was happening, but it felt as if his eye had been glued shut.

They were just so heavy.

A hand was placed in his hair, and America let out a little whine at the contact, confusion running through him.

It was confusing, how gentle the touch was. America wasn't used to kind touches.

Belarus and he didn't interact all that much. Russia was nice, but Soviet Union hated it when the two of them talked or even interacted, and Soviet Union was...he was...America's breath hitched at the memory, and another hand landed on him, this time taking America's right hand into its own and squeezing gently as if the owner had noticed America's distress and was trying to help.

The murmured voices became louder.

America sat there for a long time, drifting in a half state between awake and asleep, head heavy. He couldn't tell how long it had been, but long enough that some voices came and went, and there was some sort of movement and pressure around his right arm that nearly woke him from his half-state, but the exhaustion won out, and despite his eyes fluttering, he never woke fully.

Eventually, America began to make sense of the voices.

They were speaking in English. It wasn't like America didn't understand them; English was his first language, after all. But it was strange hearing it spoken so freely when, living with Soviet Union, speaking English was something that he had to do secretly, practicing it so he never forgot, but still watching as his first language became foreign to his ears.

Foreign, and yet so familiar.

Like so many things about what he used to like, who he used to be.

The speakers of the voices were America's family, talking amongst themselves, talking over his body, as they must have believed him to still be unconscious because they never made any effort to include him in their conversation.

America didn't mind. He wasn't ready to speak with them. How could he, when they saw how...

America knew it wasn't his fault, that his only options were to submit or die, but a part of him couldn't help but feel shame for folding to Soviet Union's demands, shame for letting himself become a puppet state and how he stopped fighting, and shame for leaving his states alone to suffer.

America was ashamed of himself. He knew that Soviet Union had wanted that—encouraged that, but it didn't stop the emotion from choking America, keeping him silent.

America knew his family was probably just worried for his safety, but...he was scared they would scorn him for being weak, for not being able to free himself sooner.

America had lost *so much,* and he didn't want to lose his family. He didn't want to lose the people he loved.

America was so tired of mourning. America was just so *tired.*

"**Do you think he'll wake up soon?**" America heard Canada ask, feeling the hand in his squeeze America's hand once more, a sign that Canada was the one holding his hand.

"**He has to eventually,**" Dad answered, his voice sounding so worried. The sound of his voice tugged at America's heart, making guilt rise up in his throat. America had made his dad sound that way. America had made his dad sound so worried and mournful, and it hurt.

America knew it was because his dad was worried for him, but it

was so easy to blame it on himself, so find some reason that he was unworthy of his dad's concern, so easy to make it out as if America were some troublesome burden his dad should wipe his hands clean of.

Even with the Soviet Union gone and the man himself dead, America was still being haunted by his words, his malevolent influence.

Go figures.

America was free of him now, but what did that really mean?

Soviet Union had destroyed as much of America's history as he could, removing tangible traces of a time before to ensure everyone was complacent with the now, to make everyone forget there had been a time before, a better time, a time without fear.

And even though he could have been a lot worse, even though he had the power to torture America until his mind couldn't take it, to kill America in the hopes of breaking any sort of spirit in America's people.

He could have been a lot worse. In a twisted sort of way, America owed Soviet Union his survival. The only reason America had lived to see his death, lived to cause his death, was because Soviet Union found some sort of satisfaction in keeping America alive and under his thumb.

America lived because his conqueror wanted him too.

At the same time, Soviet Union had hurt America in ways that he wasn't sure were ever going to heal. His eye was the most noticeable example, but that didn't account for all the other things hiding underneath the surface.

America was free of him as a person, but could he ever be free of his influence? Could America ever be the person he once was, the person he knew his family missed?

America didn't know.

America didn't know how he was meant to move on, how he was supposed to...just live as if the past fifty years hadn't happened, as if...as if he hadn't been invaded and had everything taken from him.

As if he hadn't been treated as if he wasn't deserving of respect, of personhood, of everything that every other SSR got.

America didn't know what he was supposed to do with himself now. How was he meant to move on, meant to...be something more than a puppet state, servant, and glorified punching bag?

Moving on would be nice, but to America, it seemed impossible.

So America just laid there, listening to his family talk in concerned, worried voices and trying to ignore the guilt growing in his chest.

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America had been trying to avoid talking to his family. He had awoken many times, talking with nurses and doctors, finding out that he was trapped, trapped in the hospital until they deemed him healthy enough to leave because he hadn't been eating enough.

America thought it was a waste of time. He had been freed, regardless of the complications of what they actually meant, from the Soviet Union, and now that he was free...America didn't want to be trapped in a hospital for an issue that really wasn't a big deal.

So what if he hadn't been eating enough, hadn't been *allowed* to eat enough while under Soviet Union's thumb? It wasn't that bad. America could go back to eating normally once the hospital let him out, but they wouldn't budge, pointing out a long list of issues that could come about from the malnu—from him not eating as much as they liked.

Did it explain some things, like how America got so sick so often after Soviet Union began restricting his food, how weakness seemed to persist deep in his bones, and how exhaustion chased his body until his body eventually gave out at the end of the day?

But...America had learned to live with that, and he didn't need to be monitored like a child. Like a prisoner.

America wanted to be out of the sterile environment.

It set him on edge.

Soviet Union was never one to care for America's health, so the last time America had been—

The memory of the pain was as sharp and vivid as the day it happened, no matter how many years had gone by.

Being in the hospital made it all too easy for those memories to come back, to haunt him, leaving him on edge, tense shoulders and eyes always scanning the room as if the ghost of the man who took his eye was going to appear at any moment.

So when the door opened suddenly, America, already jumpy from nerves, flinched.

Then America realized who it was, relaxing slightly.

But not fully. America hadn't been able to relax fully in years, and sometimes, it felt as if he never would again.

"**Hello, Dad,**" America said, trying to give his dad his best attempt at a smile.

It didn't seem very successful, but his dad grinned anyway, joy alighting on his face as he walked over to America's hospital bed. There were bags under his eyes, but the joy on his face made them seem small.

"**You're awake! They didn't tell us that. How long have you been up?**" Dad asked, placing a hand on America's.

"**I've been awake on and off for a while. I just...haven't felt like talking,**" America said. "**I've been really tired.**"

It was an honest enough answer, one that was less likely to provoke any anger or strong emotions that could be harmful. Dad nodded, a soft smile on his face.

"**I'm glad you're okay,**" Dad said before he suddenly raised his

hand, and then America wasn't in the hospital bed.

He was on the floor of his room, shaking as Soviet Union began to beat him.

"Please, stop," he begged in his conqueror's tongue as blows from Soviet Union landed on his stomach. America fought back the urge to protect his stomach, knowing from experience that it only worsened the rage.

He was shaking, a mix of fear and adrenaline, as he tried to bite down his fear, waiting for it to be over. It always ended eventually.

Soviet Union was saying something, but the words were muffled, and America couldn't make them out. His fear was too strong for anything else, his breaths shaky and uneven, as if the very air was being stolen from his lungs.

America couldn't breathe. Why couldn't he breathe?

Soviet Union wasn't strangling him, but he was there, watching America, anger on his face, the kind of anger that only promised pain.

America couldn't *breathe.*

"I'm *sorry,*" America begged, hoping it would convince the man to show him some mercy.

America didn't know how long he sat there trembling until his senses started to return, and he began to recognize the voice speaking to him, the language it was speaking.

It was English.

America tried to hold back the tears as the panic subsided, and he remembered where he was.

America was in a hospital. Soviet Union was dead, dead at America's hand.

Soviet Union couldn't hurt him anymore.

So why was America still so afraid of him? How did his dad, his dad who had always cared for him and loved him, who had never hurt him or broken him the way Soviet Union had, why did his dad remind him of that monster?

America knew his dad wouldn't hurt him.

Why did his brain think he would?

"**America, America, you need to breathe. I've backed away. I'm sorry. Please, son, breathe,**" America heard his dad ask from somewhere else in the room. America inhaled, his breath shaky and tearful.

The panic and the fear were old friends, and they wouldn't leave easily.

America opened his eyes, seeing his dad standing a few steps away from the bed, eyes panicked, eyes concerned, and America couldn't help the overwhelming feeling of shame that hit him.

"**Sorry. I didn't mean to,**" America said, curling up on himself slightly. He didn't get it? Why had his brain done that? Why now, the first time he had the chance to talk to his dad, actually talk to his dad and not parrot whatever Soviet Union told him to?

"**It's okay. It's not your fault,**" Dad said, walking over slowly as if he were afraid that America would panic again. America hated it, eyes moving from his dad to the IV that hung next to him, the very reason he was trapped in his bed. America glared at it. If he hadn't had that stupid thing, he could have left.

America was only so wound up cause he was in the hospital to begin with.

"**The last time I was in the hospital, I...**" America began, turning back toward his dad. But he wasn't able to finish the sentence, to get out the words to describe the beginning of the decades of shame and fear.

Dad's eyes flickered to the missing eye, and America knew his dad had understood his meaning anyway.

"**I'm sorry,**" Dad said. America shook his head.

"**It's not your fault,**" America said. It was his fault.

"**Maybe not, but I could have done more to help. I should have listened to your concerns back when this all began, and I should have done more to help you after he took control instead of standing by and regretting,**" Dad said, gently reaching out to grab America's hand. America let him.

"**I don't blame you for anything, Dad. I know…I know that you would have helped if you could,**" America said. Dad's eyes looked slightly teary, and he squeezed America's hand just a little bit tighter.

"**I got you involved with Soviet Union to begin with. It was my feud that led to you having a target put on your back. It was my feud that made you think you had to protect everyone from him,**" Dad said. America shook his head.

"**I made the choice to be that protector. Maybe your feud started it, but you never forced me to do anything,**" America's choices had led to the invasion—no one else's. Dad still looked guilty but gave America a small nod.

"**Can I hug you?**" Dad asked. America paused but nodded. Dad pulled America into a hug, gentle and not very tight, to avoid aggravating the IV in America's arm.

But it was nice.

America bit down more tears, overwhelmed by the feeling of safety that came with being in his dad's arms, the fear and panic being chased away.

For the first time since Soviet Union's death—since he had been invaded all those many years ago—America felt safe.

America pulled his dad tighter and let the tears fall.

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Some of the tightness in Ameica's chest had loosened after talking to his father. It was still there and certainly wasn't going away anytime soon, not with America all mixed up, not with the confusing emotions that were plaguing him, but it had lessened some, giving way to...

America wasn't sure what it had given way to, but he felt less shameful, less guilty, less like he was alone in the world.

America had talked with his dad a lot after his panic attack and subsequent breakdown until exhaustion tugged him back to sleep.

So, despite his concerns and fears, America was excited to talk to his family again. It had been so long...America had forgotten what it was like to have a family that cared for you.

The other soviet republics hadn't been *bad* per se, but they were all stuck in the same situation, kept away from each other, and it was hard to find solidarity with each other with all that was happening.

America often wondered if that had been on purpose. He certainly knew that Soviet Union parading him around like he was a shiny, expensive toy had its purpose in keeping people from challenging him too much, but America wouldn't have put it past him to also keep the SSRs isolated, so none of them could team up and rebel.

Lot of good that did him, considering how it all went down in the end.

The only friend he really had was Russia, when living in Soviet Union's house, and sometimes America wondered if those feelings were more than just platonic, but now that he was free, a part of America was now wondering if those emotions were real, or if America was just clinging to the one person who showed him kindness.

America would need to talk to Russia again. Talk to him, and figure out what was happening, now that they were both free.

America didn't want to make things worse than they already were. Russia had already lost his father, even if he was a complete piece

of shit.

America knew he was also somewhere in the hospital, although they had yet to be reunited.

America was pulled from his thoughts by the door opening and his brother rushing in. America flinched despite how badly he didn't want to, and Canada slowed.

"**Sorry. I should have known you'd be a little jumpy,**" Canada said before grinning as if he couldn't help himself. "**It's really good to see you.**"

The relief in his voice was palpable, and America felt a small smile stretch across his face in spite of himself.

He had missed his brother. Following Canada were Dad, Australia, and New Zealand, the family he had been closest to on the eve of his last days as a free country.

Dad had so many colonies, it was really hard to be close with them all, but Canada was his neighbor, and Australia, New Zealand, and him had become closer after the Second World War, when America was the one protecting them and spearheading their defense.

"**It's good to see you too. I really missed you all,**" America said, hands tightening around the hospital sheets as emotion welled up inside of him, threatening to choke him. Tears pricked at the corners of his eyes—not sad ones, but happy ones.

America was with his family again. The pain of their absence had dulled over the years, but now that they were *here*, that he was with them again, the dulled edges of the pain seemed to become sharp again.

"**Group hug?**" Australia said with a small laugh, arms outstretched. It was a joke, but clearly still a silent question, as his younger brother met America's eyes as he asked.

America nodded and tried to keep his breathing even as his siblings crowded around him, pulling him into a warm hug.

America let out a wet laugh.

God, he had *missed* this, missed them.

It was just a hug, and maybe it was stupid, but America was just so *emotional* about it. He hadn't really been hugged in a while, not in the way his siblings did it, and it was just a reminder of all the time together they lost, but also how *badly* he had missed them.

Missed doing stupid shit together, missed hanging out and teasing each other, and all the little things that came with being siblings. Like hugs.

Grief burned in America's throat as tears began to fall.

America kept holding his siblings tight, relishing in their reunion.

America felt warm and safe in a way he hadn't in a long time. America was squeezing them tight, and they were doing the same as if America would vanish the second they pulled away.

Eventually, they let go and pulled away, and America tried to quickly wipe the tears from his eyes. If his siblings saw them, they didn't mention it.

"**How are you?**" New Zealand asked. America frowned at the loaded question before shrugging.

"**I've been better. I want to be out of the hospital, but they won't let me leave until they think I'm at a healthy weight, even though most of my injuries are healed or no longer a problem,**" America confessed, firmly placing everything to do with Soviet Union and his time with the man in the "Do Not Touch" part of his mind.

His issues with hospitals were a part of that, and America wasn't ready to talk about that. He just...he just wanted to move on.

Canada frowned at his answer, some emotion on his face as if he had just realized something or had an opportunity to ask a question he had wanted to for a while.

"Why are you so underweight?" Canada asked hesitantly.

"I don't...I don't want to talk about that. Not yet. I need time," America said. Canada nodded, worry still present in his eyes.

"Don't worry, America. You've got all the time in the world. Although maybe you should consider getting therapy," Australia proposed. America shook his head, a sharp pang of fear going through him.

"I don't trust anyone to tell me how I feel about myself and the past fifty years. That's for me to work out on my own," America said, wrapping his arms around himself as if that would soothe the turbulent emotions inside of him.

He didn't trust that a therapist wouldn't just use him for their own ends.

America...he didn't like doctors anymore.

New Zealand placed a hand on his shoulder, and America sighed, taking comfort in the gesture.

"I understand," Australia said, but it felt more like a pleasantry than a fact.

There were very few people who could understand.

Speaking of people who could understand.

"Do you know what happened to all the other SSRs?" America asked. He wanted to make sure they were all okay. While they weren't close, there was still a strange form of solidarity that came from being trapped in the same situation, even if they weren't close.

Not to mention, Soviet Union's death probably threw a lot of things into disorder, as officials from the former union probably fought to keep their power.

Something that was only going to cause issues and, in the most extreme scenarios, civil war.

And that really wasn't something any of them needed.

"**A lot of them are busy reestablishing themselves or cleaning out the last traces of the Soviet Union in their country,**" Canada explained. "**They're all in the middle of a crazy political transition. This caught a lot more people off guard than one would expect.**"

"**What about Russia? He's in this hospital, too, right?**" America asked, wanting to know if he was right about that. Last he remembered, Russia hadn't been in as bad of a shape as America, so it was weird that America hadn't seen him at all. Canada nodded, a small smile on his face.

"**He is, but he isn't allowed to see you,**" Canada said. America blinked, confused.

"**Are the only visitors I'm allowed to have family? The nurses never mentioned that.**" America said, worried. Why would they have kept that information from him?

America didn't like it, and he felt the familiar paranoia rise up within him.

When America was in the hospital because...because of his eye, he had been a prisoner there, not allowed to leave his room, with his only visitor being Soviet Union, who made sure to drill in the lesson that America losing his eye had taught.

There, everything had been carefully monitored in order to keep America contained and exposed only to what Soviet Union wanted him to be exposed to.

Even if America had no one that could have visited him.

This felt familiar, and he didn't like it, and the urge to leave the hospital only grew.

"**Well, no, but Russia isn't allowed because of some of the injuries you had. The...the doctor said it was abuse,**" Canada began, before pausing, as if gaging America's reactions, "**So none of the former SSRs were allowed in for your safety.**"

America wouldn't pretend like hearing the word abuse used to describe how Soviet Union treated him didn't make something curl in his gut, didn't make part of him want to explain that it wasn't abuse, as a small part of him felt he deserved it.

America elected for an unsteady silence before eventually speaking.

"Russia never hurt me. He helped me a lot," America began, knowing he couldn't let Russia take the fall for his father's crimes, regardless of how Russia had chosen to remain ignorant, to pretend that it wasn't happening until he couldn't.

They all had their ways of staying sane. And Russia had loved his father.

America's family didn't look like they believed him, exchanging concerned glances with one another. Eventually, they decided to speak the words they were silently communicating with one another.

"Are you sure?" Dad asked, walking over from where he had been watching their reunion.

"*Yes*," America said, not even bothering to speak English in his annoyance. He knew his family was glad to have him back, despite everything that had been done to him, but he felt as if they didn't want to acknowledge that he was a very different person than he was fifty years ago and that they couldn't pick up where they left off.

America was going to struggle with Soviet Union's influence for years; his language, his governmental system, his ideals having sank deep into the fabric of who America was, like a vile poison, stealing away his breath and life.

English might be the language of the people, but Russian had long been the language of the government, the elite, and that wasn't going to change anytime soon.

America had watched the decolonization of his father's colonies, and he watched as his father's language persisted.

The changes to his country weren't going to fade. They were just a part of who he was now.

His family couldn't change that. No matter how much they wanted to.

"I know you don't want me to be hurt anymore, but...you can't pretend you know Russia, and you can't claim he is guilty for what his father did to me," America said. Australia nodded.

"If you're sure, I trust you," Australia said, with New Zealand nodding in agreement. Dad looked worried but acquiesced with a small nod. Canada, meanwhile, didn't.

"Australia!" Canada protested before glancing over at America as if he were holding his tongue in America's presence.

"Just because he was Soviet's son didn't stop him from being an SSR. You've talked to Ukraine, haven't you?" America said. He still didn't know the full context of what had happened between Ukraine and Soviet Union, and that topic was one that you didn't bring up unless you wanted to get in trouble, so America had never asked.

But America knew it wasn't on friendly terms. He knew there was a deep pain there. Even as an outsider, America had been living with Ukraine's biological family, and even if he had lost both eyes, the tension would have been clear as day.

Canada's face fell as America's words registered to him.

"I don't want to see you hurting anymore," Canada said, reaching out for America's hand, which America took, **"I felt so useless, being *right there* and still unable to help. I just want...I want you safe."**

"Then you have to let me make my own choices," America said, hoping Canada would understand the meaning without him having to say it. Canada nodded.

"Okay. I'll trust you. But if it hurts you, I'll make him pay. You're going to be safe now," Canada promised. Tears welled up

in America's eyes again.

"Thank you."

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The nurses moved Russia's bed into America's room the day after America's conversation with his family.

Both of them had been uncomfortable alone, and Russia had been worried about America, as apparently no one had ever updated him on America's condition, with the suspicions that Russia had hurt America.

Apparently, it was policy, a just in case, to ensure that no one could be in danger in the hospital, to ensure that people in bad situations were taken out of them.

America hated it. Hated that people saw Russia, and assumed the worst. Their independence was supposed to mean they were free of Soviet Union.

But they weren't.

America was haunted by him in his dreams, in his fears, in the familiar unfamiliarity of his mother tongue.

Russia was haunted by him in the fact that everyone saw him as his father, regardless of how much evidence there was to the contrary.

It was horrible.

But in the same way, it also continued to prove to America that the only ones who really understood were the other SSRs.

No matter what his family said.

"I thought things would be easier once he was gone and we were our own countries," Russia said with a small, humorous laugh, "But everything feels so much harder now."

"It's hard to rebuild. And it's hard to be your own country. You

haven't experienced that before. It's a different kind of workload," America said, thinking back to happier days, before the paranoia, and before Soviet Union's flag flew over his land.

America really wanted his flag back.

"Sometimes it was easier to just..." Russia trailed off, shaking his head. America frowned.

"Easy doesn't mean it was good for us, for our people. He did a lot more harm than good," America said. Russia frowned, some dark emotion flickering behind his eyes.

"That's easy for you to say. I remember...I remember my father before this, before he...lost sight of everything, turned into the kind of person he always said he hated. I can't...it's hard, realizing that the person I love did so much harm to so many people. Especially to you. I *hate*...I hate how I never realized it before, how I chose to be blind," Russia said, his voice sad and angry.

"You loved your father. That's not a crime," America answered. Russia scoffed.

"Your family sure seemed to think so," Russia said, something hurt in his voice. It seemed like America wasn't the only one pissed off by the hospital's policy being used in that way like there wasn't evidence to the contrary.

"My family doesn't know you the way I do. I've lived with you for fifty years, and you've done more for me than you'll ever know. They just see you as another part of the person who hurt me. I know you're not," America said.

"My father used to be a good person. What if I end up like him? Ukraine already thinks so," Russia said, looking away.

"And when was the last time Ukraine actually talked to you? He doesn't get to judge you on who you were fifty years ago, and he certainly doesn't get to judge you by your father's actions," America argued, angry.

He knew how Ukraine felt. He really did.

Soviet Union had taken so much from both of them, let them starve for control over them, and tried to do everything he could to prevent them from tasting freedom.

Soviet Union was a monster.

That was no reason to take it out on Russia.

Russia, who clearly wanted to be better than his father had ever been.

"I just...maybe if I realized things sooner, I could have stopped him from hurting all those people, stopped him from hurting you," Russia said, looking back at America, tears in his eyes.

There was silence for a few moments as America processed those words.

Russia wasn't innocent; that much was true, but...Russia was raised by Soviet Union, had grown up with the good version of him, before Soviet Union became as cruel as any empire.

It was hard to see when a person you loved changed like that.

Especially when it was the man who raised you.

But even then, Russia had always been so much better than him. Russia never hurt America or starved America. Russia never cared when America spoke English and let America teach him. Russia knew and allowed America to have things from before that Soviet Union would have destroyed.

Even complacent, Russia had never been anything like his father.

"Your father broke something in me a long time ago," America began with a sigh, breaking the silence. Russia frowned and looked away.

"I'm sorry."

"Before, I had pride, self-confidence. Soviet Union broke them and then spent the past fifty years making sure to grind up any remains,

leaving behind fear and shame. Now they're gone...and I feel empty. What I lost, I can't get back. And...I have no idea how to do anything anymore. But that's on him, not you. You don't need to feel sorry for his actions because they weren't your actions. We both did a lot under him. But neither of us had a choice, no matter how willing we thought we were."

Russia was silent before eventually sighing.

"No one else is ever going to see it that way," Russia said. America shook his head.

"You just need to give them time. Maybe it'll take another fifty years, but his shadow will fade eventually. Then we'll both finally be free," America said, his voice more confident than he felt.

"Maybe you're right. I just wish we could be free of it sooner," Russia said. America smile.

"Yeah. Me too."

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America hadn't realized it when it happened. He hadn't had a mirror to look at himself with and hadn't been paying much attention to his appearance.

Russia had noticed it first, looking up from the book he was reading (as there was little else to do in a hospital, and America was getting stressed by the news cycle. After a panic attack, the nurses banned them from television. That was almost worse than the panic attack.), and nearly dropping the book.

"Your flag's changed!" Russia said. America felt a rush of nervous exhilaration, throwing off the covers.

"It's back?" America asked in a strangled, disbelieving voice. He knew his flag was going to change eventually, but knowing that and having it happen were very different things.

"Yeah, it's the old flag," Russia said, staring up at America with a small smile before he brought a hand to his face. "Mine hasn't

changed, has it?"

America shook his head before getting out of the hospital bed, shivering slightly as his bare feet touched the floor.

He needed to see it for himself. Another piece of proof—the final piece of proof that he really was free. America grabbed his IV and began taking it with him as Russia also got out of his bed.

"You need to see it yourself?" Russia asked. His tone wasn't judgmental or questioning, more understanding than anything else. America nodded, looking down at his hands.

He could see the changes to his flag there, *see* that his flag was back, but a part of him...a part of him still didn't want to believe it.

America walked to the bathroom as fast as he could, careful not to rip out his IV in the process, as he didn't need to give the doctors another reason to keep him here.

America flung open the door to the bathroom and walked to the mirror.

His face lit up when he saw that flag.

America's flag hadn't changed at all since he first adopted the Stars and Stripes motif, aside from the ever-changing stars for each new state added. It was familiar, a part of who he was.

Losing that flag, to have his face branded with the symbol of the Soviet Union, of communism, of so many things he hated—it had been a hard pill to swallow, not knowing if he would ever have his familiar old flag again.

And it was back.

America felt tears well up in his eyes, the emotion overwhelming him.

Sure, it wasn't the same. His face was marred by that scar, his missing eye, dark bags under his eyes, and a gauntness in his face that hadn't been there before.

America wasn't the same.

His face didn't look the same.

But it was closer than what it had been before. The hammer and sickle were gone. Finally, the last visible trace of Soviet Union's power over him was gone.

Well, aside from the brand. But that was on his collarbone and could be hidden away. America couldn't hide the hammer and sickle on that former flag—a constant reminder of who was in power whenever he saw his face.

That reminder was gone.

America could look at his face and see himself, see the country that he had been once.

See the country he wanted to be again.

America let the tears fall.

It was such a *stupid* reason to cry but at the same time...America felt like he had gained back another part of himself that he had lost before; he felt like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders that he had never even realized before.

His soul felt lighter without the reminder of Soviet Union crushing it.

"Your people are going to be so happy that it's back," Russia said. America smiled and nodded, gripping his IV tighter.

"I'm happy that it's back. I feel...better. More like myself," America said before turning to Russia with a small smile. "It's hard to explain. I feel like a weight has been taken off my chest. Everything feels more real now."

"I'm glad. You...you look happier with that flag. Happier than I think I've seen you since...well, everything began," Russia said, his tone unsteady, as if he were trying to avoid opening old wounds.

"I think this is just...it's the first time that it's actually hit me, really, truly hit me, that Soviet and his government aren't going to be a problem anymore. Before, sometimes it felt like a dream, too good to be true, and any minute I was going to wake up again and—" America cut himself off, beginning to feel choked up.

"Because with his flag, it felt like he could be some cruel trick," Russia said, understanding. America nodded, a frown appearing on his face.

"And...and it also felt unreal that I was the one to do it. How could I have killed him? He's...I was terrified of him. I still am, I think, and the idea that I could have done that...yeah, maybe fifty years ago, it would have made sense, but now? He made me feel powerless, weak. And in turn, he felt... invincible. And now he's dead at my hands. It doesn't...it doesn't make sense, and yet that's what happened," America said, lifting up his hand to cover his missing eye.

"Well, now you have your proof that he was never invincible," Russia said. America let out a small laugh, pulling his hand from his eyes, looking at his reflection.

Battered as it was, it was still him.

"I guess I did," America said quietly, "I hope you get your new flag soon, too."

If there was anyone else who could use that reminder, it was Russia.

Russia put a hand to his head, covering the hammer and sickle that still rested there.

"Yeah, me too. Maybe without his symbol, everyone will stop claiming I am my father," Russia said. America placed a hand on his arm, trying to offer some comfort.

"We can only hope," America said before turning back to the mirror, examining every detail of his flag, refamiliarizing himself with this face, as opposed to the face that he had before.

America had his own flag again.

He really was free.

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America hadn't seen much of his states since the Soviet Union took power, since America was taken away to Moscow and locked away there.

Soviet Union had kept them away from America because they had always been more rebellious, and Soviet Union needed America broken.

They posed too much of a risk to his goals.

So America rarely saw them, and typically, it was the one Soviet Union already had on a short leash or Soviet Oregon, the one born of his conquest.

Apparently, that one was dead now.

America couldn't really bring himself to care. A state born of Soviet Union's invasion wouldn't have an easy time in a world without him.

Death was a mercy.

Still, his real states, especially the ones that had fought the hardest, America had not seen in decades.

So when his states *finally* began visiting, America couldn't have been more excited. They had been busy dealing with the aftermath of Soviet Union's death while America was hospital-bound, and apparently, Pennsylvania had preserved quite a lot of stuff from before the invasion, helping to...restore what he had lost.

And change what needed to be changed now that things had been different for so many years.

Perhaps that was why it was so ironic that Pennsylvania had been the first state America saw again.

His face was so familiar and yet so different. America was sure

Pennsylvania was thinking the same thing.

They had both changed in the past fifty years since they had last seen each other.

Most noticeably, Pennsylvania's wings were gone.

America didn't comment on it.

"**It's good to see you again,**" America said, gesturing for Pennsylvania to come over and give him a hug. Pennsylvania smiled and did just that.

"**You have no idea how good it is to see that flag on your face again,**" Pennsylvania said, relief in his voice. America grimaced, remembering how much Soviet Union liked flaunting America around to his people to keep them under his thumb.

When America pulled away from the hug, he did his best to smile.

"**You have no idea how wonderful it is to have it back. The final proof that that part of our lives is over,**" America said. The relief in his voice was palpable.

"**I'm glad it's over. I saved a lot, like the Declaration, and a lot of other stuff from before, but I was always worried that one day the protections I had would fail, and Soviet would destroy them,**" Pennsylvania said. America let out a bitter laugh.

"**He probably would have forced me to do it. Just to remind me of who I belonged to,**" America said. Pennsylvania scowled, the expression dark and ugly.

"**Sick bastard. Glad he's dead. Karmatic justice, with you being the one to take him out,**" Pennsylvania said. He was so...he was so angry. America hadn't ever heard him like this before.

But Soviet Union had hurt them all. America was just finally seeing that.

"**I wish I could have done more sooner,**" America said. Pennsylvania's eyes flickered to America's missing eye, the same

way so many people did when they were trying to combine the person they remember him being with the person he was now.

"**You killed him. That's enough for me,**" Pennsylvania said before plastering a semi-fake smile across his face. "**Enough with all that depressing talk. The future is bright. Do you know when you're leaving the hospital?**"

"**Soon,**" America said with a shrug. "**They're very concerned about my health due to the malnutrition and how often Soviet should have let me go to a hospital and didn't. At least I can walk around now, but I'm still a little bit stir-crazy.**"

"**I hope you'll be out soon. Things are a bit chaotic right now. They're trying to make Russian an official language! Can you believe that? We're not Russian, and we're not under the Soviet Union's control anymore, so why the hell would we do that?**" Pennsylvania said, laughing as if it were a funny joke.

America furrowed his brows. He understood Pennsylvania's anger, but...that wasn't the way things were anymore.

"**Because so many people speak Russian now. It was mandatory in schools, and you had to speak it to be in government, and that's not going to go away. We can either embrace it and move forward or argue endlessly over something that can't be changed,**" America argued. Pennslyvania looked at him disbelievingly, horrified.

"**You can't possibly believe that. What good comes out of pretending like Soviet still has power over us?**" Pennsylvania said. There was something worried in his gaze, something else that America couldn't read. America shook his head.

"**It's not pretending he has power over us. It's accepting the way things are now. We can't force people to use English. The Russian language is a part of the country now. I've been speaking it daily for decades now. And...and even if we only had English as an official language, that's not going to stop it from still sounding foreign to me,**" America confessed quietly. He hadn't told anyone that.

But if it got the point across he would. Pennsylvania just looked horrified, staring at America as if he didn't recognize him.

"**America,**" Pennsylvania began, sounding so...scared. "**This is why we can't have Soviet influence here anymore. Letting it stay, it'll only make us weak to other powers.**"

"**Like who?**" America asked, his voice firm.

He knew where this topic was going.

Ironically, as if he knew he was being talked about, Russia reentered the room.

Although he had been discharged two days prior, he had been staying in a nearby hotel until they let America out.

"Hello, Russia. This is Pennsylvania, one of my states. He's just catching me up on things I've missed," America greeted casually, ignoring how horrified Pennsylvania looked. Russia smiled at Pennsylvania, looking nervous.

"**Hello, Pennsylvania,**" Russia said, his English accented but understandable. Pennsylvania turned to America, eyes wide.

"**Why is *he* here?**" Pennsylvania hissed, his voice low and..and very scared.

"**Because he's my friend, and he's worried about me,**" America said, noticing the fear, the paranoia in Pennsylvania's eyes. America was intimately familiar with that kind of fear and paranoia. "**He's not his father. Russia chose me over him.**"

"**You can't be serious,**" Pennsylvania said. America straightened his back, trying to command as much authority as one could from a hospital bed.

"**He's not his father. I trust him,**" America said. Pennsylvania shook his head, looking...terrified as if he were about to be attacked.

"**How? He's the son of the man that invaded us. I wouldn't be**

surprised if he helped plan the invasion, wanting to see us crushed under Daddy Dearest's thumb! How do you know that he's not just going to manipulate you, keep you as a satellite state? America, we just got our freedom. We can't…we can't lose it again," Pennsylvania said, his voice emotional. He sounded near to tears.

America understood where Pennsylvania was coming from, the fear and paranoia that had kept him alive to see this day, but it wasn't needed anymore and was only going to hurt him.

"He's not going to hurt us. He was hurt by Soviet, too. I trust him, even if you won't," America repeated, standing firm.

Pennsylvania shook his head again. The fear in his eyes had faded some, replaced by grim determination.

"I think this is a big mistake and is only going to hurt us all," Pennsylvania began. **"But if you're sure, I won't get involved. Just…be careful."**

With those final words, Pennsylvania left the room.

"He doesn't like me, does he?" Russia asked. America shot him a small smile.

"Give him time. He's just...dealing with a lot right now," America said. A small part of him had hoped that his states would be okay with Russia.

But most of them knew nothing of Russia other than the fact that he was the son of the enemy.

America just hoped the rest of them would trust that America knew what he was doing and trust Russia as a result.

America just got out from under the control of the Soviet Union. He didn't need any more problems.

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America didn't trust his doctor. Not really. He knew, logically, that

they were probably doing what was best for him, his family, Russia, and his states; they wouldn't have let him stay with a doctor who was purposefully keeping him trapped, but...America didn't like it.

Maybe it was the clinical environment of the hospital, triggering bad memories and paranoia. Maybe it was because he was alone in the room, having to deal with everything himself.

Maybe it was because of the fact that the doctor spoke very little English, mainly Russian, reminding America of those doctors who treated his eye so long ago.

They hadn't been cruel, per se, but they had been used by Soviet Union to display his power over America. Back then, America hadn't spoken a lot of Russian, so Soviet Union had taken over the burden of consent for anything involving his medical care.

It hadn't been torture, but it had made America, America, who had just lost his will to fight, feel weak and helpless. It had been used to shame him.

America had been trapped in that hospital.

Those memories would never leave him.

So when the doctor spoke to him, America couldn't help but hunch in on himself, trying to stay small.

"Your body weight is back to normal, but we want you to stay with someone for a while just to monitor things once you're out of the hospital, just in case there are any complications, and to ensure that you're eating fine," The doctor said. America frowned, asking in a voice that was far too quiet for his liking.

"Can I leave now? Or do you want me to find someone first?" America asked. If he wasn't allowed to leave now, not allowed to leave until he complied, complied with the orders of a man he didn't trust, complied with the orders of a man that reminded him too much of a power play by Soviet Union, America...he...he didn't know what he would do.

But he felt...powerless in a strange way.

Even though the IV was no longer attached to his arm, even though he wasn't strapped to the hospital bed like he had been when his eye was being treated (Soviet Union hadn't wanted any escape attempts, even if America had been too broken to even try), all signs that he was going to be discharged, America just...he felt like it was all an act, like the other shoe was about to drop.

"You're still being discharged. This is just a recommendation for your own personal health in order to prevent any complications," the doctor said. America nodded.

"I'll see if I can figure something out. Can I leave now?" America asked, fidgeting. He was eager to leave, and the doctor seemed to have noticed that, too, because he nodded.

"Your brother is bringing in a change of clothes for you, so you don't have to leave in the hospital gown, but yes, then you can leave once that is taken care of," the doctor said, leaving the room. America watched him go, the tension only fading when he left.

God, Soviet Union really had made him fearful and paranoid of the most mundane things.

Although, maybe he had just been that way for a long time before when paranoia had been consuming him.

Either way, America hated it. How was he meant to be a country again when he could barely talk to a doctor?

"You look upset for someone who's finally going to leave the hospital he's been complaining about being in," America heard Canada say. America looked up, seeing his brother at the door, looking concerned. America smiled.

"Sorry, just thinking about the doctor. He thinks...he thinks I should stay with someone to help monitor my weight and stuff, just to be safe, in case any complications arise," America said, standing up to walk over to Canada, taking the clothes from his brother's arms.

"Do you want to stay at my place? We can catch up in a place

that isn't a hospital, make up for some lost time," Canada offered. America almost considered refusing before remembering that he no longer had a house of his own.

That was one of the first things Soviet Union took from him. His house and everything inside of it. America had no idea if his home was still standing or what happened to all of the things inside of it.

It was an option between staying with Canada or staying with one of his states, and as great as it was to be talking to his states again, things were awkward between them, most of them not liking America's closeness with Russia and America always feeling guilty when around them.

It would be a while before things began to feel normal on that front.

America smiled.

"**I'd be happy to stay with you,**" America began, stepping into the bathroom to put the clothes on. "**Just until I get my own place.**"

America could feel Canada's excitement, and he couldn't help but smile.

He was glad to be getting out of that hospital.

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It was strange staying in Canada's house. America thought he would feel better after leaving the hospital and beginning a return to normal life, but... every day, that just felt more impossible.

It was hard, figuring out what to do with his time now.

Canada was trying to help, and America, of course, had some governmental matters to take care of now that he was cleared to...but it just felt hard.

America felt trapped.

He knew he wasn't; he knew he could leave at any time, and his brother would let him, but it was hard, fighting against his brain,

against the habits that had been built up to keep him safe from Soviet Union's anger.

America tried to keep himself busy, finding chores to do, things to fix, anything to keep his hands busy.

When his hands were busy, it helped keep away the memories.

Besides, it was what he was used to, and it provided some sense of normalcy, even though America knew his definition of the word was skewed as he applied it to the abusive situation he had been in.

But what else could he do?

America tried to move forward, tried to do things he had done before the invasion, tried to do things with Canada, but America felt as if he were trapped in a cycle, trapped in the memories of what had happened.

America had thought the memories would stop haunting him when he left the hospital, but they just changed from the memories of losing his eye and the aftermath of that, to...to the memories of everything else.

America had nightmares a lot, waking up in the far-to-comfortable bed, mind trapped in the past.

America always had to go to the bathroom after that, look at his face in the mirror, look at *his* flag, his flag, not the one Soviet Union made him, and remind himself that Soviet Union was gone, that he was gone, and America was safe now.

Canada hadn't brought it up yet, but America could tell he was worried, that he knew something was up.

America hated worrying his brother. He knew that Canada had been so excited that it was all over, that America was free now, but living with him, America felt that Canada now saw all the ways America was still trapped.

How America stared at the old pictures of himself from before this all happened, trying to remember a time when he had been that

happy and carefree.

America was happy, but there was an ever-present sadness in everything he did, in every memory.

Probably grief.

America had been stuck in that survival situation for so long, not really trying to live, although he had still been able to do that but survive, and now that the fight or flight was over, now that America could live without having to worry about survival, about looking over his shoulder...it was a lot harder than he remembered it being.

America just wished that it all could have been over when Soviet Union died, that the memories would stop, and America could move forward with his life.

America should have known better.

That didn't stop the memories from hurting any less.

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America ate his meals with Canada. His brother was worried about his health and always insisted on it. Despite everything going through his head, America didn't mind it all that much. It was nice to have someone who cared for him, who cared about his health, in making sure he was going to be okay.

Not only that, but it helped America remember to eat. In the hospital, the nurses had always brought him food, scheduled meals that kept America eating, as America struggled to tell when he was hungry now, so desensitized to the sensation of hunger.

Canada offered that same schedule, reminding America to eat and ensuring that he actually finished the meal instead of eating a little and calling it a day.

America was starting to understand why the doctor wanted him to stay with someone for the first couple of weeks out of the hospital. It was surprisingly easy to neglect his own health.

It was also nice being in Canada's presence. It was a reminder that no matter how his brain tried to twist his perception of things, make America feel like he was still a prisoner in some way, America wasn't.

It was something normal, a normal that didn't come from the routine he had in Soviet Union's house.

But even his new normal had its interruptions.

"Hey, America, something just came up, and I'm not going to be able to make it home for lunch," Canada called from where he was hopping to the door, trying to tie his shoe. America leaned against the entranceway to the living room and smiled.

"Don't fall," America offered unhelpfully. Canada, having somehow managed to tie his shoe (although it looked as if it could come undone at any minute), flipped America off.

America was surprised by the laugh that escaped him at the gesture.

Canada's face lit up, and he looked proud of himself as if he had achieved a goal. He probably had. America hadn't exactly been as cheerful as he once was, and he was sure his brother was happy about seeing something familiar, another sign that America was healing.

America didn't mind, the smile not leaving his face as he waved at his brother as he left the house.

Something about interactions like that always soothed the jagged and broken parts of his soul.

America had a good feeling about the rest of the day.

He managed to resist the urge to clean everything again, as Canada's house was small. America must have cleaned it until it was cleaner than when Canada bought it. Instead, he sat down with some random book from Canada's bookshelf.

America had read around half of it when he checked the time and realized that he should eat, as it was far past lunchtime, but

America hadn't eaten yet.

Glad he had caught himself before he skipped lunch, something America knew was going to make Canada look at him with worried eyes, America bookmarked his spot in the book and made his way to the kitchen to cook lunch.

Cooking was soothing. There was something about the motions of it that calmed some of the fears that plagued his mind.

But, since he had only realized so late, America didn't bother to cook anything, instead choosing to make himself a sandwich.

America made it, took it to the table, sat down, and prepared to eat it.

But something stopped him.

As America reached out, he saw that his hands were shaking, and his breaths were starting to become shallow, shaking as well.

Fear welled up inside him, and America tried not to start crying.

Was this real? Was something about him so damaged that the act of eating alone left him choking on his fear?

America wasn't doing anything bad! He was supposed to be eating.

But his mind was turning against him, and his throat was closing up. It was so stupid, panicking over the simple act of eating food alone, but before his freedom, before Soviet Union's death, America eating without permission was a cause for...for...

America could feel the phantom hits against his skin.

Why did Canada have to have something come up? He was doing so well. But now, the smell of the food was making his stomach turn in knots, and America forced down a choked sob.

America grabbed the sandwich and took a bit, determined to push through the panic and eat.

It didn't even make it to his mouth before he was almost throwing up.

Maybe he was just sick. With shaking hands, America set it back down, retreating to his room as he tried to get his breathing under control.

His eyes burned with unshed tears, and it was hard to swallow past the lump in his throat.

America went to his bed and curled up into a small ball before he let some of his tears begin to fall.

Today was supposed to have been a Good Day.

America sat there, face buried in his knees until Canada came home.

Why couldn't it have been a Good Day?

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America knew at some point that he would have to talk to his brother.

He would have been blind to notice how Canada wanted to talk, wanted to do something to break the awkward silences that would persist whenever Canada noticed some strange new behavior in America, and was visibly holding back from asking more.

It made things a little tense, and when things got tense, America got nervous, which didn't help any. It just made America clam up more, less eager to talk.

He trusted his brother, of course, he did, but the small part of his mind trained to keep him alive during the worst of Soviet Union's rage whispered what-ifs.

Eventually, it seemed that Canada wanted them to talk.

"Ame, can we...I need to talk with you, if you're okay with that," Canada asked one morning. America nodded, leaving the

kitchen to go sit by Canada on his couch.

"**I'm not going to talk about anything that I experienced when under his control,**" America began, wanting to ensure that the conversation never even went down that avenue. Canada nodded.

"**You don't have to. I need to...I'm sorry,**" Canada began. America's brows furrowed in confusion as he turned to his brother.

"**What for?**" America asked. He didn't remember Canada doing anything recently that could warrant an apology. Canada...he had been amazing in helping America and...restoring some healthier normalcy to America's life.

"**For not being able to do more to help you,**" Canada said before looking away. He said those words like it was a big secret, a hidden shame he couldn't tell anyone else about.

It was a silly apology because Canada had done so much for him.

"**Nada, you've done so much to help me. Letting me stay here, helping me with...just feeling normal again, it means a lot. You haven't failed me, so you don't need to beat yourself up over it,**" America said, placing a hand on his brother's shoulder, hoping it would provide more comfort.

"**I meant more...with what happened at the beginning,**" Canada said. America felt a small flicker of anger within him, something he quickly stamped down.

Why did everyone want to blame themselves for what happened to him? The only people to blame were Soviet Union, the bastard that invaded America in the first place, and America, who made himself so much of a target that he...he...

"**You couldn't have done anything. It's not your fault,**" America said.

"**I could have done more. Do you know how many UN meetings I sat through...where I could have said something, called Soviet Union out on his shit, tried to protect you, and instead just sat there and watched?**" Canada said, tears in the corners of

his eyes. America swallowed hard.

He hated those meetings. The eyes of the world were on him, watching him and his shame, watching as he was forced to silently agree with everything Soviet Union said, watching as he behaved as a puppet.

America hated them because he was surrounded by friends and family and yet so firmly under the thumb of his invader.

It made America feel hopeless, helpless—like he could never be free from the Soviet Union, and this was his new reality.

"Nada, that's not your fault. Unless you were planning on invading or killing him...that wouldn't have changed things," America said. It probably would have made things worse for him if America was being honest with himself, but that wasn't a burden he needed to put onto Canada.

Canada didn't need to know that every time someone tried to help him without actually freeing him. It only seemed to make things worse, only seemed to make Soviet Union angrier and angrier at the idea that America's friends and family still cared for him.

America supposed if it wasn't so effective to parade him around like a trophy, Soviet Union would have ensured America saw or heard nothing of any of the other countries, just to further leave him trapped and broken in isolation.

"It would have made me feel like I was doing something. I just...I missed you so much. You were so close, and yet, I could never talk to you, or...or...I just felt helpless, like I had abandoned you to him, and..." Canada trailed off. America pulled Canada into a hug, resting his head on his brother's shoulders.

How could Canada blame himself for doing the best thing for him, his people, and the continued existence of people who could fight Soviet Union? If all of them had ended up under his control, however unlikely that was, then there really would have been no end to the pain.

"You stayed free. That's all that really mattered to me. I would have hated even more if you did something dumb, tried to fight him, and only got yourself captured and forced into his union. I would have felt like it was my fault for not protecting you. Maybe the last fifty years sucked a lot for me, but at least I always knew that everyone else was safe. I can't be mad at you for that. Nada, I'm never been mad at you," America said.

Canada leaned into the hug, letting out a shaky breath before falling silent for a long few moments as if he were thinking hard about something. Finally, Canada sighed.

"I missed you a lot," Canada said. America squeezed his brother tighter, burying his face into his shoulder.

"I missed you too," America responded.

They sat there like that for a while in silence, just enjoying each other's company.

Then, Canada began to speak.

"It was terrifying, the first time I saw you after you lost your eye. You were so different, and it scared me. I had been trying to keep my head down after the invasion, afraid that I was a target. Still, I was there at the UN meeting when UN got really mad at Soviet for a violation of international law," Canada began. America scowled.

"A lot of good international law did me," America muttered.

"Yeah, well, no one was ever going to be able to talk Soviet into leaving your country, and no one had an army to force him out. But...it was scary because all we really knew was that you were in his hands. And for three months, that was all I really knew, even though I tried to learn more," Canada continued.

"My flag changed, and I was branded within the first week. Soviet was also pretty intent on isolating me from my people, so I was in Russia pretty quickly after. My states were still

fighting back, and I don't think…I don't think he wanted to risk me getting away from him," America replied, lifting his head from Canada's shoulder but still holding his brother close.

They were the first words he had spoken about anything involving his time in the Soviet Union.

Canada looked shocked that America was even talking about it, but he quickly regained composure and pulled America closer to himself, as if trying to provide America, or maybe even the both of them, comfort.

"I'm guessing it only got worse from there," Canada stated. It wasn't a question, but Canada was clearly opening the floor for America to talk more if he wanted.

"Soviet didn't like that I was fighting him," America said. He didn't want to say anything else, and considering the state America remembered being in for that first UN meeting…well, he wouldn't need to.

"The next time I saw you, it was at a UN meeting. I got excited 'cause it was proof that you were alive, but…" Canada trailed off, **"Then I saw your eye and how…different you were. I wondered a lot if I could have somehow stopped that."**

"You couldn't have done anything. Nada, when I say it wasn't your fault, I mean it. Some of the states have told me about the things you have done to help my people during all of this. You did what you could. That's what matters," America said, giving his brother a small, sad smile. **"Okay?"**

"Okay. That…that was a lot. Do you want to find some stupid movie to watch to…take our minds off that?" Canada asked. America smiled and nodded.

"That sounds great. I want the shittiest movie you have. I've…I haven't watched a good movie in a while," America said. Canada grinned.

"I have just the movie for you."

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Ukraine's visit had been a surprise. Canada had offhandedly mentioned they were friends once, but it hadn't been brought up since, and America had forgotten until he stepped inside of Canada's house after what had down become a daily tradition of waking around the neighborhood and seeing Ukraine sitting there on the couch.

Ukraine and America had locked eyes, and America stood there awkwardly, not knowing what else to say.

"America, you know Ukraine," Canada said awkwardly, picking up on the tension between them. America didn't say anything, hunching in on himself a little. Ukraine nodded at America.

"Thank you for taking care of him," Ukraine said. "A huge weight has been taken off everyone's shoulders now."

America gave him a weak smile.

"You're welcome, but I didn't do it for the rest of the world," America said. The others had been the furthest things from his mind. Bleeding, injured, and weak, America had attacked and killed Soviet Union for his own freedom, finally snapping after decades of abuse.

Only to retreat back in on himself after.

"If I had the chance, I wouldn't have done it for the rest of the world either," Ukraine answered. Canada, who barely spoke any Russian, was watching them with barely disguised curiosity but seemed to be holding himself back from actually saying anything. Ukraine then turned to Canada with an apologetic look.

"Do you mind if I talk to your brother for a little bit? I know we were meant to be spending time together, but—"

"Go ahead. I'm sure you have a lot to talk about," Canada said with a small smile and slightly worried eyes as he stepped out of the room.

"Is this the former SSR bonding club, or what?" America asked, turning to Ukraine, unsure of what they really had to talk about.

"I don't know, I just...Canada tries to understand; he really does, but he can't, and I figured...you might want to talk about some of it. I saw you at all those UN meetings, too. I know—" Ukraine's voice hitched, and America looked away.

America had forgotten the first person Soviet Union starved was Ukraine.

"I forgot that you were the first one he starved as a means of control. I guess he decided it was effective enough to use twice," America said, trying to keep his voice lighthearted. Ukraine let out a bitter laugh.

"He was always a bastard like that. He claimed he wanted equality but picked his favorites and left the rest of us to starve," Ukraine said, his voice full of the bitterness of someone who had been clinging to his resentments for decades.

"And by favorites, you mean Russia."

"Who else?" Ukraine asked. "He was always the favorite, but it just got worse as time went on."

"But you know he was a victim, too, right? Just because Soviet liked him more doesn't mean that all of the hurt he went through wasn't real," America pointed out. Ukraine scuffed the toe of his shoe against the ground.

"I know that. We've talked. But that doesn't excuse the things he did do to hurt me. Maybe you can't see it, because he likes you more than he liked me, or maybe he really has changed, but when I tried to leave, Russia turned his back on me. He didn't care that we were family. He only cared about obeying Soviet," Ukraine said. His voice was still bitter...but sad, too.

"Maybe he was worried you'd be hurt if you failed," America pointed out. America knew the pain of failed escape attempts. He had been carrying a reminder of it for fifty years.

"Maybe. That doesn't mean I have to forgive him," Ukraine said. America didn't say anything after that. He knew nothing about the situation and didn't want to make anything worse. He didn't even know why Ukraine wanted to talk to him.

Finally, Ukraine sighed.

"It's going to get better," he said. America raised an eyebrow and glanced at him, prompting Ukraine to continue. "Everything feels terrible now, and it feels like he's haunting you, about to take you back somehow, but...it's going to get better. It did for me. It will be for you. Especially since you don't have the threat of him invading you again anymore."

"Thank you," America said. While he knew that Soviet Union had hurt Ukraine and him in different ways, it was nice to hear someone say that it *would* get better, that the paranoia and fear were going to get better, that it was going to become easier to become a country again, even if it felt impossible.

And Ukraine was also right.

There was no more threat from the Soviet Union to keep things in a limbo. Things could actually heal.

"Why do you think he never invaded your country? You know, before you joined NATO?" America then asked, curious. Ukraine shrugged.

"I...I don't know. After you fell, I thought my independence was going to be short-lived again, that I was going to be forced into being an SSR again, and that the other countries he used to have power over were also going to fall. But...he took you, and he stopped. I think capturing your land took more from him than he expected, even if it helped to keep him alive for a little while longer," Ukraine said. "Why?"

"Sometimes, I try to understand the way he thinks," America said. Ukraine snorted.

"Why would you do that?" he asked, looking genuinely curious.

"I don't know. I guess a part of me wants to make sense of him and why he hurt me in the ways he did. Because...sometimes it felt like it was more than just 'I used to oppose him,'" America explained.

"Here's my advice. Don't try to make sense of him, because it'll just make everything more complicated. Just...be glad he's gone and that you get to have your freedom now. Don't waste more time on him than you need to," Ukraine said before giving America a small smile and leaving in the direction Canada had gone.

America wrapped his arms around himself.

Ukraine was right. It was better to move on and stop dwelling on the past.

But...America had no idea how to begin doing that.

Maybe he really did need therapy.

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"Canada, I think I should look into getting a therapist," America announced one morning over breakfast. He had been debating with himself over the idea, so nervous about committing to getting one.

He was still afraid that he might be taken advantage of and that...talking about it all would only make things worse.

But at the same time, things weren't getting better, and America was still struggling as he did before.

Canada seemed surprised, head jerking up, mouth half open, and his eyes wide as he stared at America.

"Close your mouth, you'll catch flies," America chided, snapping Canada out of his shock.

"Sorry, I just...what happened to 'I don't trust therapists?'" Canada asked, instantly becoming focused on the conversation.

"I don't trust therapists still...but Ukraine got me thinking on some things—about moving on, and...I don't think I can do that

on my own. It doesn't seem likely, not without help. I get...stuck in ruts too easily, and I know I need to talk about some of the things that have happened to me, but...I...I don't—I can't talk about it with anyone in this family. Not yet, and maybe not ever. But some things I need to talk about," America explained. Canada nodded, nothing but understanding in his eyes.

"Did you have any therapists in mind, or...?" Canada trailed off, letting the question hang in the air. America shot him a small smile.

"I was hoping you would help me. I...I'm still pretty paranoid, especially when it comes to this, and I was wondering if you would be willing to help me go through candidates and help me pick ones that would be good and help make sure my distrust of them doesn't cause me to become...completely unreasonable in my standards," America asked. Canada nodded, a grin spreading across his face.

He looked really happy about America's choice, and regardless of how nervous America was, that only reaffirmed to him that he was making the right choice.

"Of course. I'd be honored to help. Have you started compiling anything yet, or do you want to start later?" Canada asked. America shot his brother a sheepish look.

"I haven't started yet. I told you because I was afraid I would back down unless someone held me accountable," America confessed. Canada laughed.

"Well, that's understandable. But...I'm really proud of you. This is a really big step, and I know it's not one you want to take, but...I'm glad you're learning to take care of yourself again," Canada said. America smiled, rolling his eyes.

"You keep talking like that, and people are going to start thinking I'm the younger brother," America joked.

"Ha, ha. I'm a great older brother," Canada said, **"Now, can I have a hug?"**

America stood up and let his brother hug him, relishing in the comfort he provided. Canada had been so great the past couple of weeks as America readjusted. A small part of America knew that part of the reason that living with Canada had motivated him to start working past his issues was because he didn't want his little brother to see him as broken anymore.

Since America was preparing to move out to his new home, one that he had recently bought for himself, he still wanted to keep that momentum of self-improvement and keep working to move past it all.

Canada had proven to America that it was impossible to do that alone.

"**Thank you,**" America said, feeling himself begin to choke up a little. Canada squeezed him a little bit tighter before pulling away.

"**What else are brothers for?**" Canada asked. America smirked.

"**Free food, what else?**" America joked. It wasn't a good one, but Canada laughed anyway, as he always did whenever America managed to make a joke.

America thought that Canada was just happy to see America slowly healing to a mood where he could make stupid jokes.

It was nice. Every time Canada got so excited about America's recovery progress, it only motivated America to do even better.

It was strange how one person could make everything so much better.

Even if America never managed to find a therapist that worked for him, he was still going to try to work on himself. For Canada, for Russia, for all his family and friends.

America didn't want to be that broken little puppet state anymore.

He was going to be himself again, the United States of America.

America wasn't going to let the Soviet Union win.

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Being a country was hard. The eyes of the world were constantly on you; everything you did was judged and debated, and your fate could sometimes dictate the fate of an entire country.

America had never really thought about how hard it was to be a country. Not until his independence was restored.

Of course, it wasn't because he didn't know how to be a country, but rather that he was struggling with personal issues that came about as a result of everything the Soviet Union had done to his lands, his states, his people, and to him.

The world was different now.

And it was hard to adapt when struggling with your very identity and self-worth.

America was really lucky to have a support system that was always going to be there for him.

However, America was finally going to stop mooching off his family's kindness, as he had finally gotten his own home in his capital and was preparing to move back there and into his new home.

As great as it was living with his brother, America didn't want to live off his kindness forever. Besides, America wanted to live in his lands again. After so many years in Moscow, America felt like he had finally come home.

"**Smaller than I expected,**" Canada remarked as he parked the car outside of it. America let out a small laugh.

"**Soviet's house was big. Smaller…it reminds me more of your home. Someplace that's safe. Hopefully, it'll help me have less panic attacks,**" America said.

"**Yeah, that's probably a good thing. Just…not what I was expecting,**" Canada remarked. America laughed.

"**I'm just full of surprises,**" America joked. Canada rolled his eyes, getting out of the car.

"**I'm getting your stuff out of the car. You better help before I break your stuff 'cause you were being too annoying,**" Canada said. America quickly scrambled out of his seat, a smile on his face as he did so.

His soul felt lighter than it had in a really long time. Therapy had been working better than America wanted to admit.

"**Russia's going to be here soon, too. He wanted to help me unpack, and we wanted to catch up,**" America explained. Canada grimaced.

"**Good thing your states aren't here. How are things going on that front?**" Canada asked, referring to the fact that a majority of America's states viewed his relationship with Russia as a threat to their safety.

Not that America could blame them after everything the Soviet Union put them all through.

"**Eh, it could be better, but some of them are coming around. It's helped that his people have been helping us and that he hadn't tried to make me into a puppet state,**" America explained.

"**Oh, I can hear the 'not yet' in that last statement,**" Canada said. America gave a strained smile.

"**Everyone just wants to be safe and wants me to be safe. It's just...**"

"**They're being overbearing,**" Canada finished. America nodded.

"**Painfully so,**" America reaffirmed, walking up to the front door of his house.

His house.

For the first time in a long time, America had a house to call his own. America unlocked the door, letting his brother inside, before

leaning against the doorway, waiting for Russia to show up.

Russia arrived shortly after, waving to America as he walked up the front steps.

"It's good to see you again," Russia said. America laughed and nodded, pulling Russia into a hug.

"Good to see you too. It's been a while for us both," America said, pulling away and gesturing for Russia to come inside.

"Well, governments have certainly kept us busy," Russia commented. America nodded.

"That and the fact we don't live together anymore. Everything is a big adjustment," America said.

"It is...but it's getting easier," Russia said before his smile faded some. "Do you think about him often?"

"I used to. I try not to anymore. It...it always ends up with me in a bad place. And...Ukraine told me it was best not to waste any more time on Soviet. Sure, he did a lot of horrible things to me, and that changed me, but...I'm here, and he's not, so what's the point in continuing to treat him like he can still hurt me?" America, his tone becoming softer and more vulnerable.

"I wish I could do that," Russia said.

"You'll be able to someday. I didn't think I could do this when I first killed him, but I can now. I just needed to give myself time. And...not all the reminders of him are gone," America said, his hand moving to rub the brand on his chest. "But I've heard the best revenge is to live a happy life, and I know I am going to do just that."

Russia smiled.

"Yeah, I think I would like that too," Russia said. America grabbed Russia's hand and dragged him inside.

"Then let's do that."

Broken Brother (Soviet America AU)

This AU was made by @universal-casey on Tumblr and Ao3. This is her AU, but I have just been doing some writing for it. Check her out!

America looked so small in the hospital bed, skinny and gaunt, with dark shadows under his eyes. He looked pale, sickly. He was bandaged, an IV coming out of his right arm.

He looked so different than the lively brother Canada once knew, a ghost of his former self.

While UN meetings had shown that before...a part of Canada wanted to believe that that had just been an act, that America was just acting weaker than he was due to some fear of Soviet Union.

He knew then that it hadn't been true. But it was hard to confront the truth when it was so painful.

It was hard to see his big brother, who had always been so cheerful and full of life, be so...quiet and downtrodden.

America had been unrecognizable.

When Canada had heard the news of Soviet Union's death, he could hardly believe it. It seemed so unbelievable, but it was true.

He was gone.

And America had killed him.

That didn't really surprise Canada. Even with...how his brother had changed throughout his years under Soviet occupation, even if Canada had only seen the bits and pieces Soviet Union wanted them to see, Canada knew his brother would find a way to reclaim his

independence.

Even if it took longer than Canada had expected.

But...Canada expected to see his brother, after regaining independence, in the same condition he had been in after his war of independence against their father. Maybe a little injured, but still strong and prideful.

America was anything but now. He looked like hell.

"What happened?" Canada heard his dad ask, his hand running through America's hair as if he was trying to reassure himself that America was real, that he really was there, really was free, and that this all wasn't a dream.

Canada had had dreams about getting his brother back before.

He knew this wasn't one. In his dreams, his brother was the one from his memories, with his old flag, acting how Canada remembered him. In his dreams, Canada got his brother back exactly as he lost him.

America never looked this weak, never still bore the flag given to him by his occupier.

This wasn't any dream. But America's wasn't going to magically get better.

"Well, he was injured from his confrontation with the Soviet Union, but we're more concerned about the chronic issues," The doctor explained.

"What kind of chronic issues?" Canada asked, a note of fear in his voice. While they had all noticed America's missing eye, as it would be impossible not to, and noticed how he was getting slimmer...no one ever knew much about his health.

That had worried Canada a lot. It was almost worse than the three months after the invasion, where no one had seen the hide nor hair of America, and everyone, Canada included, had presumed the worst.

But...to know that there might be chronic issues that America now had from whatever Soviet Union put him through...that was scary.

Canada hated seeing his brother hurt.

"Well, based on the x-rays we did, as well as old bruises that we saw when bandaging him, we believe that America might have been experiencing some form of domestic abuse, and considering how long he was with the Soviet Union, it was most likely chronic abuse—especially considering how malnourished he is. Most of the reason he is going to be here for a long time isn't because of the injuries but because of the malnourishment," the doctor explained.

Canada's stomach dropped, and he grabbed his brother's hand, trying to provide himself some comfort, grounding himself in the knowledge that his brother was *alive*.

That didn't stop the guilt.

What-ifs had plagued Canada for a long time. How could they not, when he shared such a long border with his brother, saw him at every UN meeting sitting next to his occupier—his abuser?

Canada had always wanted to do more. He felt helpless, sitting on his side of the border as his brother suffered.

How could they all have sat by and let that happen? America was brought to UN meetings, and not a single one of them had noticed? Recognize that he was being abused? Done something to help?

America had seemed nervous around Soviet Union, but Canada had just chalked that up to the power imbalance between America and him, to the threats against America's states or people, but...

It made horrifying, horrifying sense.

And Canada felt like a fool for not realizing it sooner.

Canada squeezed his brother's hand tighter, just now noticing the unsteady silence that had fallen across the room. Dad looked horrified, hand resting on America's head.

Australia's face had paled, and he looked as if he was going to be sick.

"No wonder he's so skinny," France murmured.

Canada pressed America's hand to his forehead.

"I'm so sorry," Canada whispered. He knew his brother couldn't hear him, lost in the throughs of unconsciousness, probably at peace for the first time since the invasion, but...Canada had to say it.

"If he wakes up, call us in so we can do another check," the doctor said with a smile before leaving the room, leaving behind Canada's family and their stunned silence.

There was an air of guilt permeating the room as if all of them were stewing their own thoughts of how they failed and how they should have done better.

"I had suspected something was going on, but..." Dad trailed off, shaking his head.

"What could we have done? Gone to war to get America back?" Australia asked, with a slight shake of his head.

"We should have done something more. We should...we all knew that the personality change was wildly out of character, but we...we never tried to look into causes? I don't...I know Soviet hated him, and they had their issues together, but I guess a part of me hoped that as long as America didn't try to fight him, Soviet would have left him alone," New Zealand said.

"We didn't want to believe it, so we didn't," Canada said, looking back down at America's face.

His brother looked so peaceful, asleep like this.

Canada hadn't seen him look this at peace in a long time.

"We can't change what we didn't do. We can only offer whatever help we can give now," Dad said as his hand began to run through America's hair again. Canada nodded.

He had to do whatever he needed to help his brother heal.

It would soothe the budding guilt in his chest.

And Canada really wanted to have his family be whole again.

It was over.

It was really over.

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When Dad called them all into his hotel room after a visit to the hospital, Canada felt his stomach drop.

All sorts of worried thoughts ran through his mind, about what his dad could want to talk to them about, to the state of his brother, to some horrifying news the doctor wanted to tell them.

Canada wished that he could have run to the hospital to visit his brother, to see that he was alright.

Maybe it was irrational, but a small voice in the back of Canada's mind whispered that if he let his brother out of his sight for too long, America would disappear again, that somehow, America would be taken away again, and Canada would be helpless to his suffering.

Canada knew the anxious thoughts were unrealistic, but America had been taken from under his nose before, and now, here in Russia, the homeland of the man that had caused America all the pain he had suffered in the past fifty years...Canada just felt he couldn't trust that America would stay safe here.

"What is it, Dad?" Australia asked. Canada's eyes narrowed as he looked at his dad's face. He seemed somewhat excited, but nervousness was present behind his eyes.

The excitement made the knot in his chest loosen some.

The nervousness prevented it from loosening all the way.

"I went to see your brother this morning," Dad began, and as much as Canada knew he should wait for his father to finish, he couldn't stop himself from blurting out a question.

"Is it okay? Did his health take a turn for the worst?" Canada asked.

"He's okay," Dad said, and Canada felt a weight get lifted from his shoulders as his dad said that. "He's also awake."

Canada's head jerked in surprise, and he gaped at his father. America was awake. America had woken up, Canada could talk to his brother—*properly* talk to his brother—and hug him and apologize and *see* his brother again.

The knot in his chest was gone, replaced by relief and the slightest bit of anger.

Why hadn't Dad told them to come to the hospital instead of wasting their time with this meeting?

"Why didn't you lead with that?" New Zealand asked incredulously, standing up as if she were preparing to leave.

"Because he ended up having a panic attack within seconds of our conversation beginning, and I don't want you triggering another," Dad said, his voice and eyes full of concern. Canada's stomach dropped again.

Oh, *America*, what did Soviet Union do to hurt you this badly?

"Oh," New Zealand said, swallowing and sitting back down. Even Australia looked a bit perturbed. After all, America was their older brother. It was hard seeing someone like that look weak, to be hurt like that.

"I'm still going to visit him," Canada said, looking his dad in the eyes. Canada had been dreaming of his reunion with his brother for a long time, and he wasn't going to let his dad stop him.

Besides, if America was panicked, Canada didn't think leaving him alone would help. America had to see that they were there. America had to see that he wasn't alone anymore.

"I'm not going to stop you. I just...wanted to warn you, so if something is triggered, you're prepared," Dad said. Canada nodded.

"Do you know what triggered the panic attack you saw him have?" Australia asked.

"I'm...not sure, but I think it had something to do with my movement. I think...sudden movement probably never meant anything good for him," Dad theorized. A sick feeling rolled in Canada's stomach, and Canada tried to push it aside, turning to the door.

"I'm going to visit America now while I know he is awake," Canada began, "I need to make sure he's okay."

No one stopped him, and Canada could tell that his siblings were following right behind him.

Panic attacks. America had had a panic attack. It felt like they had only scratched the surface of what had been done to America.

Canada was afraid of what else he would find. Afraid of all the other ways that his brother might have been hurt without his knowing.

But Canada was more afraid of not knowing than knowing.

Canada just hoped America was going to be okay.

That was all that mattered to him.

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Canada's government wasn't super happy that he was insisting on staying in Russia until America was allowed to leave the hospital. But with the rest of their family having gone back to their respective homes, Canada...he had to stay behind to be there for America.

Some of it was guilt. The rest was concern for his brother.

Canada knew he had Russia to keep him company now,

but...Canada still felt strange leaving America alone. It wasn't that he didn't trust Russia (okay, maybe he did a little), but that America needed people to be there for him.

Especially considering how often he complained about the hospital.

Even though Canada knew a little as to why America hated hospitals now, knew that it was linked to all the hurt that Soviet Union had caused his brother, it was nice seeing him complain.

It reminded Canada of before.

The more he talked to America, the more, behind an unfamiliar flag and decades' worth of trauma that Canada could only try to understand, the more he saw traces of the person his older brother had been. The person his brother still was, deep down, hidden under fear and paranoia.

So Canada tried to talk to him as often as he could, helping, little by little, to coax his brother out of his shell, to show him that he was safe now.

When Canada walked into America's hospital room, he expected a lot of things. America talking to a doctor or nurse, America having a conversation with Russia in Russian or some variation of the two.

And while America and Russia did seem to be having a very animated conversation in their shared language, Canada's eyes were immediately drawn to his brother's face, as his jaw dropped.

America's flag was back.

His brother's old flag, his original flag, was back.

America looked up at Canada and gave a little smile, waving. Canada's heart *ached* at how familiar it was.

America had looked so different with the Soviet flag, but now that it was gone...America looked a lot happier.

"Ame, your flag!" Canada exclaimed, walking over to his brother, unable to keep his own wide grin off his face. America's smile

widened a bit more—nothing like the joyful grins America had before, but still wider than Canada had seen from him since the restoration of his independence.

"It changed this morning," America said, smiling at Canada.

"Hug?" Canada asked, knowing by now it was better to ask as America was still prone to panic attacks. America nodded, and Canada pulled his brother into a hug, squeezing tightly.

Canada knew it didn't mean his brother was healed; of course, it didn't, but it was so *achingly* familiar, something that he had missed, that had been confined to the pictures Canada looked at late at night, feeling regret and guilt.

America looked more normal, and he looked happier.

Canada knew it had to do with the flag.

Canada pulled away, smiling brightly as he did so.

"Man, if I had known, I would have brought something to celebrate," Canada said, half jokingly, half sincerely.

"You don't need to bring anything. I already appreciate you being here," America said. Canada smiled.

"Well, I want to. This is...your flag is back, and that's amazing. And..." Canada said before trailing off, unable to find the words to explain what this meant to him, what it probably meant to his people, to *him*.

"I look more like who I used to be," America said bluntly with a small smile.

"You're still you," Canada quickly protested. As much as he would be the first to say that his brother had changed, that his brother wasn't the person he remembered him being, he didn't want America to think there was anything wrong with that.

America had changed, and he had to change, and Canada understood that. Even though he mourned the parts of his brother

that had been killed during the Soviet occupation, he celebrated that his brother was *alive*, that his brother was healing, that things were going to get better.

There was nothing wrong with changing.

Canada certainly wasn't the same person he used to be back then, either.

"I know...but...I felt different with that flag on my face. I don't...with my flag back, it's kinda like the final conversation that he's gone, and it's over now, and I don't have to worry anymore. Before, it felt like there was maybe another shoe that was going to drop," America said, hunching in on himself and rubbing his arm.

America did that a lot, hunching in on himself as if he were trying to hide.

Maybe he was.

Russia leaned over and whispered something to America as if Canada could understand Russian and would be able to overhear. America shook his head and responded.

"Well, now all you need is for them to let you out of the hospital, and then things can really start going back to normal," Canada said, trying to cheer his brother up before wincing at his choice of words. "Okay, maybe not back to normal, but—"

"I can go home, and things can start to get better, and I can start fixing things. I know what you meant," America said, uncurling from his protective position.

"Good. I—sorry, I really didn't mean to word it that way," Canada said, not wanting his brother to be offended, not wanting America to think that Canada thought he wasn't normal, that something within him was wrong and he had to go back to who he was before to be better.

"Canada, it's okay," America said, but something in his eyes made Canada question if he really believed that.

Canada questioned a lot about his brother these days.

Once, they used to read each other very well. Now, reading America felt like reading a stranger.

Canada knew it wasn't fair to blame his brother for anything, but...he missed what they used to be able to do together, and even though his brother was right there...Canada missed all that they would never be able to do together again.

"You look a lot happier now," Canada said. America smiled.

"I am."

That was good enough for Canada. He didn't care about all the ways his brother had changed.

So long as he was happy, that was good enough for Canada.

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Living with America made all of his still-healing wounds from his time under Soviet occupation blindingly obvious to Canada.

Canada tried not to bring it up, to let his brother deal with things on his own terms. Canada was afraid that pushing it was only going to cause America to close off more, and letting him talk when he was ready was the best option he had.

That didn't stop him from fretting over his brother.

When Canada came home, there was a heavy air hanging in his house, something that left him feeling unsettled.

Canada walked inside, glancing into the kitchen and seeing an uneaten sandwich on the table.

A terrible feeling sunk into his gut.

Where was America?

"America?" Canada called, receiving no response. Trying not to

panic, Canada began to search the house, finding his brother curled up on top of his bed.

Canada let out a sigh of relief, his panic fading to concern.

"America, are you alright?" Canada asked. America's breath hitched, but he didn't say anything. Canada frowned. It didn't seem like America was having a panic attack, but something had clearly scared him.

Canada took a few steps closer before sitting down on the bed. He didn't sit near America, nor did he try to touch America. Canada resolved to wait until America was ready to talk—or had at least calmed himself down.

"I'll be here when you're ready," Canada said. America's head jerked in a small nod.

Canada and America sat there for a few moments until America slowly began to uncurl himself, tension in every feature.

Canada opened his mouth, prepared to ask his brother if he was all right, before pausing, realizing it was a stupid question, as America very clearly wasn't okay.

"Feeling better?" Canada elected on asking, feeling it was a better question.

"I...I think so," America said, his voice soft and hesitant. He lifted his head to look Canada in the eyes, revealing teary eyes. Canada's face softened into a smile.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Canada asked. America shook his head, and Canada nodded. "Okay. Are you okay with a hug or me touching you?"

America scooted closer to Canada before pulling him into a hug.

"Thank you," America said, and Canada pretended like he couldn't feel the tears dripping onto his shoulder, "For being there for me."

"I'm always going to be here for you."

"Promise?" America asked, voice quiet. Canada smiled.

"Promise."

Book 2

Hey, so this oneshot book is 125 chapters, which is crazy, so I am creating a second oneshot book! Yay! Its first oneshot is being published at the same time as this announcement, so go over there and check it out.

But I also have some other oneshot books that aren't a part of this one, typically because they are for AUs or certain subcategories that I wanted to organize into their own books. So, I have listed them below (with links!).

Forget Them Not: The Great Countryhumans Archive

In a world where countries are personified, an organization called the Countryhumans Research Archival Project has dedicated itself to recording the stories and histories of these countryhumans. (AKA an archive of fake newspapers and such that canonically exists inside my countryhumans universe. Just a little fun project to explore different angles of things)

A Gilded Cage of Broken Wings

Countryhumans AU of the War of 1812 in which Michigan is not able to be retaken by the Americans and becomes a British Colony, later Canadian Province.

Countryhumans: The Human Perspective

A collection of countryhumans oneshots, all from the perspective of humans. From friends, to lovers, to humans just reading the news, this is how they see the landspirits they live alongside.

CountryGems

A oneshot collection of Countryhumans as Gems within the Steven

Universe Universe. Mainly just making countries gems and using the world-building of Steven Universe as the environment they get to play in.

Countryhumans Hispanic Heritage Mounth 2024

A Collection of Stories from CHHM 2024, all based around the Spanish-speaking countries and states of the world!